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Recruiting the next generation: a study of attitudes, values, and beliefs

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THESIS

RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION: A STUDY OF ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND BELIEFS

by

Andrew G. Wilcox

March 2001

Thesis Co-advisors: Mark J. Eitelberg
Alice Crawford

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This study examines the attitudes, values, and beliefs of teenagers regarding military service. Specifically, the study looks at generational theory, the characteristics and views of the so-called "Millennial" generation, factors that influence attitudes toward military service, and recruiting strategies used by the Navy and Marine Corps. The study identifies the uniqueness of the next generation of youth, or Millennials, because of the interconnected relationship of five forces of influence: "baby boomer" parents, education, the new economy, technology, and the media. Information on youth attitudes was collected through 36 focus groups, including 677 teenagers at nine high schools in six states. Data obtained from the focus groups reveal common trends across schools and states: teenagers exhibit relatively little knowledge or understanding of the military; higher education is the military's chief competitor for recruits; and the dissuaders of military service are far stronger than the persuaders of service (due largely to misperceptions and ignorance). Recommendations to improve recruiting are offered, particularly the need to better inform teens about the realities of military service. Efforts toward this end should enhance long-term military recruiting efforts.

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RECRUITING THE NEXT GENERATION: A STUDY OF ATTITUDES, VALUES, AND BELIEFS

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This study examines the attitudes, values, and beliefs of teenagers regarding military service. Specifically, the study looks at generational theory, the characteristics and views of the so-called "Millennial" generation, factors that influence attitudes toward military service, and recruiting strategies used by the Navy and Marine Corps. The study identifies the uniqueness of the next generation of youth, or Millennials, because of the interconnected relationship of five forces of influence: "baby boomer" parents, education, the new economy, technology, and the media. Information on youth attitudes was collected through 36 focus groups, including 677 teenagers at nine high schools in six states. Data obtained from the focus groups reveal common trends across schools and states: teenagers exhibit relatively little knowledge or understanding of the military; higher education is the military's chief competitor for recruits; and the dissuaders of military service are far stronger than the persuaders of service (due largely to misperceptions and ignorance). Recommendations to improve recruiting are offered, particularly the need to better inform teens about the realities of military service. Efforts toward this end should enhance long-term military recruiting efforts.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Intuitively, one would expect that a "downsized" military force, combined with an increased population of youth, would make military recruiting easier. In actuality, the opposite is happening. Recruiting duty is now almost akin to combat, considered by many as the toughest job in the military.

Meanwhile, the services have begun referring to recruiting as a "war for personnel." In the US Congress, some feel the problem is so severe that only conscription can save the force: "Success or not, speculation continues—no matter how much people try to knock it down—that a draft will make a comeback. Largely, that's because the recruiting problem is serious, and could get worse as demand increases." (Omicinski 2000)

Military recruiting is now at ground zero—arguably the most important mission getting the most attention. The services began experiencing recruiting problems in the mid-1990s. Over the course of the past several years, all services with the exception of the Marine Corps have missed their recruiting goals. As of 1 January 2001, the Marine Corps had met its recruiting goals for 65 consecutive months. At the same time, the Navy has suffered setbacks. In 1999, the Navy fell short of its goal by approximately 7,000 recruits (Brady 2000). The Navy subsequently increased its recruiting force to more than 5,000 recruiters and met its fiscal year (FY) 2000 goals. The Army and the Air Force have also suffered setbacks in this so-called war for personnel. The Army fell short of its goal by 6,300 recruits in 1999 and the Air Force missed its goal by more than

5 percent, or about 1,700 recruits (Brady 2000). In fact, in FY1997 the Army began the year with a goal of recruiting 89,700, then reduced the number that year to 85,898, and then reduced it yet again to 82,000 (Asch, Kilburn, Klerman 1999). Like the Navy, both the Army and the Air Force managed to meet their FY2000 recruiting goals. Although, as Derbtshire (2001, 3) states: "Army goals were met in 2000, but only by the offer of lavish sign-up bonuses and college-financing programs."

The primary recruiting age group, 18-24 year olds, will increase by approximately 3.3 million between the years 2000 and 2008, peaking around 2013. (Birnbaum, Ezring, Howell, Schulz, Sutton 2000, 6) And of this age group, the prime recruiting market is only 1.49 million and is forecasted to increase to 1.65 million by 2010. (Ross 2001) With this in mind, what is happening to make recruiting so difficult? Have the attitudes, values, and beliefs of today's youth changed so much from those of the previous generation? Current approaches to recruiting are based on what worked in the past, but the past may not resemble the present or future—at least when speaking about generational differences.

Given the importance of the problem and the apparent failure of recruiting to "connect" with today's youth, the armed forces have been desperately searching for new ways to advertise and attract volunteers. Within the past year, all services except the Marine Corps have changed their recruiting slogans; the Army, Navy, and Air Force have found new advertising agencies; and all services have initiated new studies to better understand their target market. What do these teens think? What are their values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding military service? How do we recruit this next generation of American youth? These questions form the focus of the present research.

B. PURPOSE & BENEFIT OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the views of the next generation, often called "Millennials," as they relate to military service. Can our knowledge of these views help military recruiting? What is unique about the Millennial generation, if anything, that can be used to improve recruiting strategies?

This study seeks to assist military recruiting by providing new information on the generation of young men and women just coming of recruitable age. It is hoped that this information will enable the US military to more effectively tailor its recruiting programs and strategies to the needs, expectations, and desires of the next generation. Additionally, this thesis supports continuing research by the Naval Postgraduate School's Center for Recruiting Innovation project on Web-based recruiting. The information gained from this thesis aids in the design and execution of that project.

C. SCOPE

This thesis examines attitudinal changes toward the US military, the characteristics of the current recruiting target market, the relationship between the recruiting strategies of the Navy and the Marine Corps, and the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the next generation. Recruiting strategies of the Army and Air Force are considered outside the scope of the study and are not addressed here.

D. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used for this thesis is principally qualitative, relying primarily on three sources of information: related literature, interviews with key individuals and experts, focus groups with teenagers in high school, and formal and informal surveys. One of the greatest advantages of qualitative methods is the depth and texture of

information obtained. As Kruger (1994, 135) writes, "A guiding principle of qualitative analysis is to provide enlightenment, to lift the level of understanding to a new plateau."

A qualitative approach was selected for this study to support and expand upon the many quantitative studies that already exist. For example, the Defense Department's Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS), which included a survey and was administered annually until just recently, has provided the US military with a rich source of quantitative data on youth attitudes. Additionally, Lt. Colonel Cheryl Shumate's doctoral dissertation, *From the Disinterested to the Joiners: American Youth Propensity to Enlist in the United States Military* (1999), provides a relatively recent, quantitative analysis of American youth attitudes toward the military. Prior to the present study, scant qualitative analysis was conducted on American youth attitudes toward the military. Volumes have been written about the demographic characteristics and behavior of the next generation of youth; however, relatively little is known thus far about their attitudes toward the military.

The literature review draws from an exhaustive search of books, magazine articles, and other published materials relevant to the subject. This information was primarily used to understand the environment, culture, and the general characteristics of the Millennial generation and to design questions for the focus groups.

Data were collected through 36 focus groups of 677 high school teens, at nine high schools in six states. Focus groups were used for several reasons. First, as Kruger (1994, 10), author of *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* observes: "Focus groups tap into human tendencies, attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts,

products, services, or programs and are developed in part by interaction with other people. We are a product of our environment and are influenced by people around us." Focus group methodology tends to provide rich information and a clearer picture of the data as compared with quantitative methods. As Kruger (1994, 30) also notes, focus group research tends to have more validity:

> The nub of qualitative research—and its claim to validity—lies in the intense involvement between researcher and subject. Because the moderator can challenge and probe for the most truthful responses, supporters claim, qualitative research can yield a more in-depth analysis than that produced by formal quantitative methods. (Kruger 1994, 30) .

Along with the focus groups for collecting data, nine interviews were conducted with noted professionals in the field. Additionally, two seniors at Monterey High School, in Monterey, California, assisted the study by developing and administering a survey at their high school on teen attitudes toward the military.

E. ORGANIZATION

Chapter II, "Approach," details the methodology used for this study. In particular, this chapter examines general focus group methodology, the researcher's technique, organization of focus groups, surveys administered, and the incorporation of the literature.

Chapter III, "Overview of the Millennial Generation," gives the reader an idea of what characterizes the next generation—their defining qualities, and what sets them apart from previous generations. The chapter ends with a look at what Millennials think is important. Chapter III pulls together a good portion of the literature review and sets the stage for the rest of the study.

Chapter IV, "Influences Shaping the Millennials," examines the five forces that have shaped and molded the Millennial generation: parents, technology, education, the new economy, and the media. This chapter explores the relationship between these forces and how they have affected the thinking and culture of this generation.

Chapter V, "Youth Attitudes Toward the Military," examines teens' plans after high school, their perceptions of the military, including what they feel is attractive and unattractive, and possible reasons why teens view the military as they do.

Chapter VI, "Recruiting Strategy Analysis," evaluates recruiting strategies of the Navy and the Marine Corps and seeks to identify areas that may be incongruent with what is known about the next generation. This chapter specifically examines the military market for recruiting and how each service attempts to develop its own particular niche.

The final chapter summarizes the study, presents conclusions, and offers several recommendations to better recruit the next generation of American youth.

Five appendices appear at the end: (A) information related to the Monterey High School survey, including the questions used and a summary of results; (B) the outline, or protocol, used to engage students in conversation during the focus group portion of the study; (C) slides presented in each focus group session; (D) a summary of focus group responses, transcribed from audio tape recordings; and (E) the definitions of reasons used by the researcher for selecting a service during the universal conscription exercise (explained in Chapter IV).

II. APPROACH

A. INTRODUCTION

As previously observed, this study is primarily qualitative. Heavy emphasis is placed on the literature review to develop a conceptual framework for the Millennial culture, as discussed in Chapter IV. The literature review is further used to explain why Millennials may view the military as they do, and it is used throughout the study as a reference point for discussing the focus group results.

The study incorporates the results of a survey by two Monterey High School interns working with the researcher. The students conducted a survey at Monterey High School as part of a requirement for the Monterey Academy of Oceanographic Sciences (MAOS) program. The students' survey and results are presented in Appendix A, and selected findings are discussed elsewhere to expand on major themes of this study.

B. FOCUS GROUPS

Information on youth attitudes toward the military was collected through 36 focus groups, including 677 high school teens at nine high schools in six states. The goal in focus group research is to understand reality. According to Kruger (1994, 21), "attention is placed on understanding the thought process used by participants as they consider the issues of discussions, not the answers per se." Kruger established three phases in conducting a focus group study: planning the study, conducting the interviews, and analyzing and reporting.

The planning phase of the present study involved setting up each focus group at the nine high schools. The schools were selected based on a personal contact, or a person

at the school willing to get permission and coordinate activities. Thus, these schools were "targets of opportunity" and not chosen for any special qualities such as representativeness. Gaining access to high schools as a military member is often difficult. The researcher had to ensure all schools that he was not involved with military recruiting.

The following high schools and locations were selected for study. They are presented in the order in which they were visited:

- Monterey High School, Monterey, California
- Aptos High School, Aptos, California
- Osbourn High School, Manassas, Virginia
- East Granby High School, Granby, Connecticut
- Wilbraham & Monson Academy, Wilbraham, Massachusetts
- Granbury High School, Granbury, Texas
- Grapevine High School, Grapevine, Texas
- Cedar Falls High School, Cedar Falls, Iowa
- Tripoli High School, Tripoli, Iowa

Students in these high schools can probably be classified as being between somewhere in the middle to upper-middle socioeconomic divisions of the American population of the country. Unfortunately, the researcher did not have any contacts in inner-city schools or schools that have proportionately high numbers of students from the extreme ends of the nation's socioeconomic distribution. (The one possible exception here is Wilbraham & Monson Academy in Massachusetts, which is a private school.) Nevertheless, it should be noted that students from a range of socioeconomic categories

are represented within each of the nine schools visited as were reflected in the surrounding communities.

Step two, conducting the interviews, started with a brief introduction of the researcher, the background and purpose of the study, as well as a brief explanation of the focus group methodology. (See Appendix B.) In particular, the researcher emphasized being frank, the importance of the respondent's answers, and that there was "no such thing as a wrong answer." Additionally, since the researcher was dressed in a Marine Corps uniform, it was necessary to assure each focus group that they should feel free to be "brutally honest," even if they felt that the researcher may be offended.

After the brief introduction, a short slide show of generations was presented. (See Appendix C for a complete list of the slides presented to each focus group.) The slide show provided the definition of a generation and how generations are formed, looked at "Baby Boomers" and Generation X, and described the respondents' generation, the so-called "Millennials." Following the slide presentation and the outline in Appendix B, the researcher conducted hand counts of how many students planned to attend college, those who planned to join the military, those who had immediate family members or other relatives who served in the military, and how many teens planned to enter the labor force immediately after high school.

Table 1 describes the high schools visited and the focus groups in detail, including the subjects of the classes, grade levels, and distribution of students by gender. As seen here, the students were divided almost equally by gender, with girls outnumbering boys by a slight margin. The vast majority of students were juniors and seniors.

Table 1. Description of Focus Groups, by High School, Subject, Grade, and Gender

High School and Designator	Subject	Grade	Male	Female	Total
Monterey #1	Civics	Senior	12	9	21
Monterey #2	Civics	Senior	10	13	23
Aptos #1	Science	Junior/Senior	14	7	21
Aptos #2	Science	Junior/Senior	12	8	20
Aptos #3	Science	Junior/Senior	5	7	12
Osbourn HS #1	US Gov	Junior/Senior	8	9	17
Osbourn HS #2	Social Studies	Senior	10	10	20
Osbourn HS #3	Science	Junior/Senior	9	9	18
Osbourn HS #4	Social Studies	Senior	9	12	21
Osbourn HS #5	World Hist	Freshmen	13	11	24
Wilbraham/Monson #1	English	Senior	10	0	10
Wilbraham/Monson #2	Amer Hist	Junior/Senior	6	2	8
Wilbraham/Monson #3	Amer Hist	Junior/Senior	1	7	8
Wilbraham/Monson #4	Amer Hist	Junior/Senior	8	3	11
East Granby #1	English	Senior	0	4	4
East Granby #2	Lang/Arts	Junior	4	7	11
East Granby #3	English	Junior	3	16	19
East Granby #4	English	Junior/Senior	14	11	25
East Granby #5	English	Junior/Senior	6	7	13
Granbury HS #1	Theater	Junior/Senior	9	14	23
Granbury HS #2	English	Junior	6	12	18
Granbury HS #3	Social Studies	Sophomore	1	14	15
Granbury HS #4	English	Junior	16	17	33
Granbury HS #5	ROTC	Fresh--Senior	23	10	33
Grapevine HS #1	Economics	Senior	16	6	22
Grapevine HS #2	Economics	Senior	13	10	23
Grapevine HS #3	Economics	Senior	12	14	26
Cedar Falls #1	West Civil	Junior/Senior	9	11	20
Cedar Falls #2	West Civil	Junior/Senior	7	13	20
Cedar Falls #3	West Civil	Junior/Senior	14	8	22
Cedar Falls #4	West Civil	Junior/Senior	14	8	22
Cedar Falls #5	West Civil	Junior	10	10	20
Tripoli HS #1	US Gov	Junior/Senior	6	9	15
Tripoli HS #2	US Gov	Junior/Senior	9	20	29
Tripoli HS #3	US Gov	Junior/Senior	9	4	13
Tripoli HS #4	US Gov	Junior/Senior	5	12	17
Total					
Number			**333**	**344**	**677**
Percent			**49.2**	**50.8**	**100.00**

Table 2 shows the results of the informal survey regarding students' plans after high school. More than nine out of ten participants stated an intention to attend college after high school. This compares with just fewer than 5 percent who planned to join the military and about 4 percent who expressed some other plans such as enter the work force or attend a vocational or technical school. According to one report, a much smaller proportion of teens typically say they are military bound: "Only 2 percent of today's teenagers say they would like to join the military—about the same percentage that want to be veterinarians" (Jaffe 2001, 1). At the same time, as seen in Table 2, just over 8 percent of the students claimed to be "thinking about" the military. This includes only those who indicated that they did not intend to join the military—suggesting that the pool of potential military recruits may be somewhat higher than 5 percent.

Table 3 shows military experience by family members for each focus group. As seen here, just over 40 percent of the teens' immediate family members (parent or sibling) have some type of military experience, and 32 percent have other relatives (uncle, grandparents, cousin) with military experience. About 28 percent of the study sample said that no one in their immediate family had military experience.

For accuracy and clarity, each focus group session was audiotape-recorded. These tapes were later used to ascertain and transcribe key points. (See Appendix D for a summary of transcripts of each focus group.) Additionally, the tape recordings allowed the researcher to interpret and tabulate responses for the universal conscription exercise discussed in Chapter V.

Table 2. Post-High School Plans of Focus Group Participants

		Plans After High School				
High School and Designator		**College**	**Military**	**Other**	**Total**	**"Thinking About" Military ***
Monterey #1		20	1	0	21	0
Monterey #2		22	1	0	23	1
Aptos #1		8	1	12	21	1
Aptos #2		14	1	5	20	0
Aptos #3		12	0	0	12	0
Osbourn HS #1		16	1	0	17	5
Osbourn HS #2		18	0	2	20	2
Osbourn HS #3		16	2	0	18	0
Osbourn HS #4		21	0	0	21	0
Osbourn HS #5		23	0	1	24	5
Wilbraham/Monson #1		10	0	0	10	0
Wilbraham/Monson #2		8	0	0	8	1
Wilbraham/Monson #3		8	0	0	8	0
Wilbraham/Monson #4		11	0	0	11	2
East Granby #1		4	0	0	4	0
East Granby #2		9	0	2	11	2
East Granby #3		19	0	0	19	4
East Granby #4		20	5	0	25	0
East Granby #5		13	0	0	13	1
Granbury HS #1		21	2	0	23	0
Granbury HS #2		17	1	0	18	2
Granbury HS #3		15	0	0	15	2
Granbury HS #4		32	1	0	33	10
Granbury HS #5		26	7	0	33	3
Grapevine HS #1		21	1	0	22	0
Grapevine HS #2		23	0	0	23	1
Grapevine HS #3		25	1	0	26	1
Cedar Falls #1		20	0	0	20	1
Cedar Falls #2		20	0	0	20	2
Cedar Falls #3		19	2	1	22	1
Cedar Falls #4		20	2	0	22	0
Cedar Falls #5		19	1	0	20	1
Tripoli HS #1		15	0	0	15	0
Tripoli HS #2		28	0	1	29	2
Tripoli HS #3		10	1	2	13	5
Tripoli HS #4		16	0	1	17	0
Total						
Numbers		**619**	**31**	**27**	**677**	**55**
Percent		**91.4**	**4.5**	**3.9**	**100.0**	**8.1**

* Note: This includes only students who had previously indicated that they planned to do something other than join the military (college or "other").

Table 3. Focus Group Participants with an Immediate Family Member Who Served in the Military

	Family Military Experience			
High School and Designator	**Immediate Family**	**Other Relative**	**None**	**Total**
Monterey #1	6	0	15	21
Monterey #2	3	0	20	23
Aptos #1	2	1	18	21
Aptos #2	3	5	12	20
Aptos #3	2	6	4	12
Osbourn HS #1	10	0	7	17
Osbourn HS #2	18	0	2	20
Osbourn HS #3	9	0	9	18
Osbourn HS #4	17	0	4	21
Osbourn HS #5	16	1	7	24
Wilbraham/Monson #1	7	0	3	10
Wilbraham/Monson #2	4	0	4	8
Wilbraham/Monson #3	5	0	3	8
Wilbraham/Monson #4	6	0	5	11
East Granby #1	2	0	2	4
East Granby #2	11	0	0	11
East Granby #3	14	0	5	19
East Granby #4	16	1	8	25
East Granby #5	7	0	6	13
Granbury HS #1	10	10	3	23
Granbury HS #2	9	6	3	18
Granbury HS #3	6	6	3	15
Granbury HS #4	13	19	1	33
Granbury HS #5	16	14	3	33
Grapevine HS #1	5	13	4	22
Grapevine HS #2	2	17	4	23
Grapevine HS #3	10	9	7	26
Cedar Falls #1	5	13	2	20
Cedar Falls #2	3	14	3	20
Cedar Falls #3	4	15	3	22
Cedar Falls #4	8	13	1	22
Cedar Falls #5	4	14	2	20
Tripoli HS #1	4	9	2	15
Tripoli HS #2	7	13	9	29
Tripoli HS #3	3	8	2	13
Tripoli HS #4	8	8	1	17
Total				
Number	**275**	**215**	**187**	**677**
Percentage	**40.6**	**31.8**	**27.6**	**100.0**

Kruger (1994, 65) emphasizes the importance of "providing consistent background information to each participant about the purpose of the study in order to minimize tacit assumptions." This was accomplished with each focus group session by adhering to the outline in Appendix B. The slide presentation of each focus group session was typically well received and had the added benefit of getting participants to think about their generation. In other words, the schools and students were able to have a "learning experience" as well as to participate in an academic study. On several occasions, word spread to other teachers that the researcher was not a recruiter and had an interesting presentation; this resulted in additional invitations to conduct focus groups in other classrooms.

Kruger (1994, 6) defines a focus group as "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment." Marketers have been using focus groups for years to get feedback on new products. The focus group methodology is actually quite common today and is generally used for a specific intent. As Kruger further states, "The intent of the focus group is to promote self-disclosure among participants. It is created to accomplish a specific purpose through a defined process and obtain information of a qualitative nature from a predetermined and limited number of people" (Kruger 1994, 11, 15). In essence, this is the intent of the present study.

The average number of students in each focus group was 18 (see Table 1), slightly larger than the 12 that Kruger (1994) recommends, and each session tended to last from 50 minutes to an hour and a half—the time period of a high school class. Additionally,

Kruger (1994, 18) recommends focus groups be "composed of people who are similar to each other." "The nature of this homogeneity" he states, "is determined by the purpose of the study." High school teens at a given school, in a given state, have much in common and they are generally within the target market for military recruiting. As Kruger (1994, 19) observes, "the rule for selecting focus group participants is commonality, not diversity." With this in mind, high school classes are perfectly structured for focus groups.

To detect trends in attitudes, values, and beliefs, numerous focus groups are required in different geographic settings, to get an accurate understanding of the subject matter. As Kruger (1994, 17) states, "multiple groups with similar participants are needed to detect patterns and trends across groups." Conducting 36 focus groups—in nine high schools and different regions of the nation—allowed the researcher to identify certain trends across diverse groups.

The researcher used open-ended questions that tended to add more texture to the data. As suggested by Krueger (1994, 19): "Focus groups are solicited through open-ended questions and a procedure in which respondents are able to choose the manner in which they respond and also from observations of those respondents in a group discussion." The focus group method gives the researcher a rich source of data because participants are not limited in their responses to a predetermined list of choices. Appendix B outlines the procedure for the focus group sessions and lists the questions put forth to all focus groups in this study.

"Focus group interviewing is more than asking questions in a group," according to Kruger (1994, 65); "it involves asking well-thought-out questions in a focused environment." "Why" questions are rarely used in focus groups: rather, opened-ended "what" and "how" questions are presented to participants in a sequential, planned fashion. Additionally, "each session should be characterized by homogeneity but with sufficient variation among participants to allow for contrasting opinions" (Krueger 1994, 77).

Kruger also provides a suggestion for determining when the interviewer has enough information. "A helpful rule of thumb," Kruger (1994, 89) writes, "is to continue conducting interviews until little new information is provided or when you reach theoretical saturation." This researcher is confident, after 36 focus groups, that "theoretical saturation" was reached. A summary of all focus group transcriptions is presented in Appendix D.

C. MONTEREY HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

As stated in the introduction, two interns assisted the researcher by administering a survey on teen attitudes toward the military. The interns were seniors at Monterey High School and performing the internship as part of their academic program. A copy of the survey is provided in Appendix A along with corresponding results.

The primary intent of the survey at Monterey High School was to offer a measure of comparison with the focus group results. Similar questions put forth in focus groups were also posed in the Monterey High School survey. The survey resulted in responses from 148 seniors at Monterey High School. The sample population included slightly

more males (55 percent) than females (45 percent). Gender and grade level were the only descriptive statistics collected from this survey.

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III. OVERVIEW OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Before looking at the characteristics of the next generation, it is important to understand how a generation is defined. Bill Strauss and Neil Howe (Strauss and Howe 1991), generational historians, define a generation as "a special cohort group whose length approximately matches that of a basic phase of life." Or, as Don Tapscott (1998, 19) writes: "A generation exists mostly in the minds of the people who belong to it. Generations are forged through common experience. The baby boomers were shaped by pivotal events such as the war in Vietnam, Woodstock, the moon landing–all of which were brought to youth by the new glowing device in the living room." Jim DeBrosse (1998, E4) describes a generation as "a cultural concept, which holds that every period of 20-25 years gives rise to a group with a new, distinct cultural consciousness. Honed by parenting, peer pressure and historical events, this collective psyche fires a shift in popular trends, art, legislation, conduct and so forth."

As noted, Strauss and Howe[1] (1991) maintain that each generation parallels a life phase, which they define as:

- Youth (0-21 years)
- Rising Adulthood (22-43 years)
- Midlife (44-65 years)

[1] Bill Strauss and Neil Howe are perhaps the leading experts on generations. They have written extensively on the subject. Much of their research is used as a foundation for this study. It should be noted, however, that their statistics on the Millennial generation are derived from a sample of students in Fairfax County Schools, Virginia. This sample may not be representative of other geographic areas in the US. Nevertheless, many observations of Strauss and Howe are insightful and informative in understanding the Millennial generation.

- Elderhood (66-87 years)

So-called "Millennials" are defined as youth, ages 0-21 years in the life phase model. Their older generational siblings, "Generation X," are rising adulthood, ages 22-43 years; "Baby Boomers," parents of most Millennials, are in midlife, ages 44-65 years. Finally, the "Silent" and "GI generations" are in elderhood, ages 66-87 years.

Generations are products of the unique influences in their particular life phase and birth year. According to one source, "they [generations] come in waves, some of which are more favored than the others because of the vagaries of demographics, economics, business cycles, and even wars" (Economist 2000, 23).

One must consider the very word "generation" and recognize that it is derived from "generalize." Therefore, any observations or conclusions about generations are really generalizations, or group tendencies, and may not relate to all persons within a particular generational cohort.

Further, generational change is a gradual evolution that does not change like the "on" and "off" of a light switch. As Libengood (2000) writes: "One day a giant switch is thrown somewhere and automatically everyone born thereafter is the 'new generation.' Not at all. Generations are living, breathing sociological entities. Change neither happens overnight nor does it happen everywhere at once or to everyone at once." Thus, today's teenagers may possess characteristics of the preceding generation and not be as fully a part of the trends that affect their younger siblings.

B. CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

The next generation is known by a variety of names. Don Tapscott, author of *Growing Up Digital: the Rise of the Net Generation* (1999), refers to the next generation as the "net generation." "They were bathed in bits, immersed in a revolutionary technology that the rest of the world is still struggling to understand" (Economist 2000, 23). Bill Strauss and Neil Howe, authors of several books on the subject, refer to the next generation as the "Millennial Generation"—born with a clean slate that the new millennium implies. Probably the most common name, "Generation Y," is what marketers have dubbed the next generation—the much larger, but younger successor to "Generation X." However, the next generation does not resemble previous groups in many ways, showing such different behaviors and beliefs that it would be unsuitable to refer to them as just a mere outgrowth of what came before. The next generation has also been referred to as the "echo boom," offspring of the "Baby Boomers," or those born during the post-World War II reconstruction period.

Still others refer to the next generation as "screenagers," as opposed to teenagers. In addition, some have called them "Generation Why," because of their collective habit of questioning everything. "Dot com" or "Generation D" are other terms used to describe this group, primarily because of the group's affinity for technology. "Generation Next" has also been used to refer to this group. The term "Generation Next," was actually developed by Pepsi for an advertising campaign, and does not really capture the group's true essence.

A generational name is important; it gives each generation a collective identity that defines it as a cohort of people different and unique from past generations. For the

remainder of this study, the term "Millennial generation," or simply Millennials, is used, since it best characterizes the true nature of this generation of youth.

1. General Characteristics

Born after 1981, Millennials are the most celebrated and anticipated generation in American history. As William Strauss observes, "the next generation has been and will be lavished with attention and grow up to turn the nation around" (Debrosse 2000, E4). Authors of *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation,* Strauss and Howe (2000, 189) write: "Not since the Progressive era, near the dawn of the twentieth century, has America greeted the arrival of a new generation with such a dramatic rise in adult attention to the needs of children. Never before in living memory has a generation been so celebrated, from conception to birth to preschool through elementary, middle and high school." This generation may indeed turn out to be the next great generation that will "entirely recast the image of youth from downbeat and alienated to upbeat and engaged—with potentially seismic consequences for America." (Debrosse (1998, E4) likewise sees great promise in this group: "Secure enough in themselves not to need the pyrite of material badges of status, wise beyond their years because of their unprecedented access to information, the Millennials will be a generation capable of hearing the distant trumpet."

Pick up a magazine or newspaper today and you will inevitably run across an article extolling the virtues of the Millennial generation. Nary a negative word is written on the Millennials. They are often described as "weaned on everything from the Internet and prosperity to academic pressure cookers, Columbine, working moms, and high divorce rates" (O'Reilly 2000, 145). Or, as Don Tapscott (1998, 104) describes them:

"Children of the digital age appear to be smart, accepting of diversity, curious, assertive, self-reliant, high in self-esteem, and global orientation." The Primedia/Roper National Youth Opinion survey finds this generation as "self-reliant, ambitious, discriminating of the many messages with which they are bombarded, and responsible" (Primedia 1999, 32). At the same time, David Johnson (1999, 2) writes: "Gen Y is culturally social, success oriented, and career directed. They have been reared to be winners and successful in the activities they participate. They have more respect for advice and procedures than Xers and do not mind institutional input and involvement."

Millennials are projected as the largest generation in US history at the end of their last birth year, 2003. Most sources estimate that the Millennial generation will number from 70 to 80 million. "The millennials are upwards of 70 million, rivaling the 76 million boomers and dwarfing the more than 46 million Gen Xers sandwiched between," writes Brian O'Reilly in *Fortune* (O'Reilly 2000, 145). Strauss and Howe (2000, 14) confirm: "Swelled by recent fertility rates, large families and increased immigration, the millennial generation is forecast to be a giant at 76 million." And Cristina Merrill, (1991, 1) adds: "Seventy-million strong, Gen Y is the first generation raised in the brand era and has become a critical consumer that now controls over 94 billion dollars." Lastly, John Moran (2000, 3) estimates the Millennials at 80 million in his article, "New World Brings New Challenges for Gen Y Kids":

> As the children of the Baby Boomers, Gen Y kids are born roughly between 1985 and 2005. Consequently, they share a lot in common with their Boomer parents. The two generations are roughly the same size, with 80 million members. As a demographic and economic force, each generation redefined markets in a way that smaller generations, such as Generation X, never could.

The relatively enormous size of the Millennials is due partly to the growth surge of US births between 1989-1993, exceeding four million for the first time since the 1960s, and increased immigration. (Trends 1998, 6)

Although the Millennial generation is forecast to be the largest generation ever, its members generally come from small families: "Despite the rising number per birth cohort, the Millennials are spread over more families—meaning they are growing up on average in the smallest families ever" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 81). The small families of most Millennials enable their parents to lavish attention on them and provide Millennials with a higher standard of living than that of past generations. This certainly has spillover effects on the attitudes, values, and beliefs of Millennials.

Not just small families have affected the Millennials. The entire concept of family has been recast. Nearly one in three births in the early 1990s were to an unwed mother. Now, nearly 60 percent of children under age six have mothers who work outside the home, compared with just 18 percent in 1960. Twenty-five percent live in a single-parent household, and three in four have working mothers. (Neuborne and Kerwin 1999, 81) Additionally, one-report states the largest growth in families is single parents. (Trends 1998, 6)

Millennials are large, powerful, and diverse. As Neuborne and Kerwin (1998, 83) write: "This generation is more racially diverse: one in three is not Caucasian." Further, Strauss and Howe (2000, 87) note that Millennials are the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in US history: 16 percent are Latino, and 14 percent are African American.

According to one report, Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the US, and approximately 40 percent of this group is under the age of 19. Hispanics tend to have the lowest high school completion rate, 63 percent, compared with 88 percent for blacks and 93 percent for whites. (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 6)

a. Gender

Gender relationships have changed significantly within the Millennial culture. Teenagers today do not appear to be as polarized about their sexual identity. That is, boys have close friends who are girls, but not "girlfriends," and girls have close friends who are boys, but not "boyfriends." Further, they do not appear to view each other in stereotypical gender roles as much as found in previous generations. In essence, relationships between boys and girls are not necessarily as sexual as in the past.

Closely related to the above is the notion that Millennials are the first generation raised in a culture where male standards of conduct no longer prevail. According to certain scholars, this group is the product of a "female-dominated society" that has made gender neutrality a norm. (Macmillan 2000)

Strauss and Howe (2000, 223, 228) observe that the Millennials are the "first generation to grow up with true images of female empowerment. Millennials view the Boomer feminist ethos as gender landscape where some fixing is in order." Strauss (2000) further observes, in an interview, that these kids "have been raised in a culture that has made a lot of deference to making sure society is gender-neutral."

Because of female empowerment, Millennials are the first generation where parental duties are split more evenly between husband and wife. Few families

today reflect the traditional model family of American folklore—that is, a working husband, homemaker wife, and two children. Family patterns—owing to divorce, single parents, and cohabitation—are so complex today that generalities are difficult to apply.

Perhaps this changed landscape is cause for the significant and growing achievement disparity between boys and girls. Again, as Strauss and Howe (2000, 222, 226) find: "Millennial girls are the generational pathbreakers, setting the standards for their peers and leading teen experts to speak of a new boy problem in America." And, further, they see the shift in gender patterns as favoring girls overall: "In this chaotic social environment where greater teamwork is sought for kids, girls may have an edge as the gender better able to cooperate—and hence, dominate the edge of the new youth culture."

In fact, girls are twice as likely as boys to have "A" grade averages and do up to ten hours more homework than boys per week. Additionally, boys are ten times as likely as girls to be disciplined in school, receive special education, be held back, or be medicated to control behavior. (Strauss and Howe 2000, 223, 224) Only time will tell if this trend will manifest itself in the military recruiting arena. However, some experts are already stating that young men will increasingly view the military as "a safe place to be male" (Strauss 2000; Macmillan 2000).

b. Generations of Influence

To better understand the Millennial generation, we must first briefly examine the two generations that have had the greatest impact on the Millennials: Baby Boomers and Generation X. Strauss and Howe (2000, 7) write: "Millennials' attitudes and behaviors represent a sharp break from Generation X, and are running exactly

counter to trends launched by the Boomers." The term "Baby Boomer" is used to describe persons born between 1943 and1960 (Strauss and Howe 2000, 15). (Others have established Baby Boomer birth years as 1946 through 1964.) Boomers were the most celebrated generation until the arrival of their offspring. Boomer social issues have often been called the "boomer law of cultural tyranny," referring to the notion that what Boomers consider important *becomes* important (Zoba 1999, 61). Baby Boomers are a product of the post-World War II reconstruction period, and the arrival home of 10 million GIs from Europe and the Pacific at the end of the conflict.

Wendy Murray Zoba, author of *Generation 2k: What Parents & Others Need to Know About the Millennials,* describes Baby Boomers as follows: "Never have so many been such complete strangers to famine, plague, want, or war. Theirs are the blessings of prosperity, theirs the spoils of peace. Leisure, prosperity and sheer numbers opened the way for this generation who had it all handed to them to emerge as revolutionaries who wanted to write their own rules" (Zoba 1999, 14). The Vietnam War, the youth revolution of the 1960s, and the social and economic upheavals experienced in the 1970s helped shape the values, attitudes, and beliefs of Baby Boomers.

As one report (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 7) states: "Boomers entered the workforce seeking fulfillment through their jobs rather than through their personal lives. They define job security as a lifelong commitment to a corporation...." They are often characterized as self-absorbed, rebellious, distrustful of institutions, subscribing to immediate gratification, and consumption-oriented. Boomers are the generation in political power: Bill Clinton, Al Gore, and George W. Bush are Baby Boomers as well

as most members of the US Congress in 2001. Understanding Boomer generational values and beliefs will better enable us to understand their offspring—the Millennials.

Generation X, the generation immediately preceding the Millennials, might be an older sibling, teacher, coach, or even young parent. Generation X, born between 1960 and 1982, may be more responsible for the attention lavished on the Millennials than anything else. Very little of what is written on Gen X can be called positive. One of the few positive characterizations of Gen X, discovered while conducting this study, is its entrepreneurial spirit and grasp of technology. Gen X is the group often credited with initiating the "information revolution."

Nevertheless, much of what has been written about Gen X is uncomplimentary. They have been described as a "detached generation" that is both lazy and apathetic. Often, Gen Xer's are characterized as not being career-directed, skeptical of process institutions, needful of speed in process, and wanting individual attention. They were once dubbed "latchkey kids"—due to both parents working and often having to fend for themselves. Further, they experienced a "greater degree of parental permissiveness and absenteeism than any generation before them" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 8).

One study (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 8) states that the most important values to Xers are their "sense of belonging; autonomy and entrepreneurship; flexibility; short-term rewards; augmenting personal skills; job security; feedback and teamwork." At the same time, Bruce Tulgan describes Gen Xer's confidence, often mistaken for arrogance,

as "that of children who learned over and over again that, if they had to, they could fend for themselves" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 8).

Generation X, however, grew up in a very different environment than did their older generational siblings, the Boomers. They were the first generation to experience "divorce as 'normal' rather than the exception" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 8). And "Xers grew up in a world tempered with fear of company layoffs" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 9). They might stand as the most "disadvantaged generation" in American history since the end of World War II. Indeed, Generation X faced a host of negative trends:

- Generation X faced twice the likelihood of their parents divorcing as did their own parents
- They are the most aborted generation in US history
- They are the most heavily incarcerated generation in American history
- Gen X lurched through economic recessions, double-digit inflation, and bleak job prospects
- They came of age when corporate downsizing sacrificed forty-three million jobs
- They attended college when federal grants for college tuition were cut back
- One in three held jobs to pay for college
- Generation X experienced skyrocketing college cost and their parents helped less with college cost than did their own parents. (Zoba 1999, 39)

Gen X is also responsible for perpetuating a host of negative youth trends, which actually started during the Boomer days:

- Decreasing SAT and ACT scores
- Increasing teen pregnancies
- Increases in drug and alcohol abuse
- Sharp increases in youth crime and violence

Perhaps it is the combination of these social ills that alerted Boomer parents that they had to do something different, shifting the parental model toward a different approach, resulting in a new, "better" generation. (Boomer parents are discussed in detail in Chapter IV.)

Incidentally, as noted, it is possible for young Millennials to have Xers for parents. Most of these Xer parents would have been born in the early 1960s—close to the tail-end of the Boomer generation. The vast majority of teens today have Baby Boomers for parents. However, as the Millennial generation ages, more and more Millennial teenagers will have Xers for parents. Only time will tell if their parenting style will be similar to that of Boomers.

c. Core Characteristics

Strauss and Howe (2000, 43) characterize Millennials as possessing seven core characteristics. According to the authors, Millennials are:

- Special
- Sheltered
- Confident
- Team-orientated
- Achieving
- Pressured
- Conventional

At the same time, Tapscott (1998, 68) describes Millennials, as having 10 core characteristics that are similar, but subtly different, from those identified by Strauss and Howe. According to Tapscott, Millennials are:

- Fiercely Independent
- Emotionally and Intellectually Open

- Inclusive
- Freely Expressive with Strong Views
- Innovative
- Preoccupied with Maturity
- Investigative
- Immediate
- Sensitive to Corporate Interest
- Suspicious

The present study finds a somewhat different range of characteristics for Millennials. By combining the core characteristics that Strauss, Howe, and Tapscott identify, and adding characteristics discovered over the course of this study, a more accurate depiction of the Millennial core characteristics can be stated as follows:

- Special
- Independent and vocal
- Sheltered
- Optimistic/confident
- Pressured/impatient
- Team-oriented
- Conventional/traditional
- Skeptical
- Tolerant/open minded
- Materialistic

(1) Special. So, who are the Millennials? What makes them so special? Why does our society seem so fixated on the next youth generation? Perhaps, they are special because they are a generation unlike any before: they grew up in an environment that has significantly altered their values, beliefs, and attitudes. They are also the richest, best-educated, and healthiest generation in history (Economist 2000, 23).

Strauss and Howe (2000, 43) claim that Millennials are special because they "collectively feel vital to the nation and to their parents' sense of purpose." Another author writes: "They are very used to having stuff tailored to them" (Moniz 2000, 22). One need only pick up a recent magazine to find yet another article extolling the virtues of this generation. It is only natural they would feel special. Millennials have been in the spotlight since their birth. They came into being when the country had a more positive attitude toward children and shifting public priorities toward youth. Millennials tend to share a sense of "special-ness" or collective achievement, and they are a generation marked by positive trends. (Strauss 2000)

(2) Independent and Vocal. Another consistent theme relates to the independence of the next generation. Millennial teens appear to value their independence more than their counterparts do in previous generations. Tapscott (1999, 68) believes this may be because Millennials are information seekers rather than receivers. He finds that they do not like to be told what to do and prefer self-discovery. Perhaps Millennial Boomer parents are reliving their youth vicariously through their children by encouraging free expression and strong views. Conceivably, Millennials are fiercely independent because "they're the most watched over generation in memory," or, because "today's kids comprise the most supervised and scheduled child generation ever" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 134, 9). This over-controlling tends to be a characterization of Boomer parents, who are discussed at length in the following chapter. Teens in focus groups conducted for the present study were not shy about describing independence as one of their generational characteristics. Here are their comments on the subject:

We want to be more independent rather than have someone control everything. Our parents are too controlling.

We are independent.

[We value] freedom and liberty [more].

We value individuality more.

We are a very "me" generation; it is all about you; do what you want; what you feel like doing.

Our generation is more focused on being nonconformist.

[We have] more opportunities, more freedoms. People are growing up by themselves.

One teacher in a focus group, who has been teaching for 30 years, observed: They are a generation that believes they have a right to voice their opinion on anything at anytime—they are the 'why' generation.

(3) Sheltered. Thus far, Millennials as a group have not had to sacrifice much or been subject to much adversity. They have not experienced an economic recession, "stagflation," or depression, or a major conflict. The Gulf War, with just 362 American causalities and the most lopsided military victory in history, is their generation's experience of war. Unlike their parents, the Baby Boomers, or even Generation X, Millennials did not have to practice for nuclear war by crawling under school desks to "drop and cover," or to witness a presidential assassination, or be drafted for war. Theirs is a generation that knows mostly peace and prosperity. During focus groups, teens mentioned that they have had a protected, sheltered lifestyle mainly because of their parents and economic prosperity. Their comments are as follows:

Our parents [have influenced us]—we are sheltered.

Lack of exposure to adversities and hardships [has influenced us].

We are codependent on our protected, sheltered lifestyle.

We've sort a of been babied by our parents.

(4) Optimistic/Confident. Brian O'Reilly (2000, 145) writes: "The Millennial teenager appears warm, confident, and upbeat, with little of the moral superiority that characterized the antiestablishment types of the 1960s. They are optimistic about finding a good job and don't act as if it is entitled to them." Often described as confident and optimistic about the future, the average Millennial has few of the worries that surrounded previous generations:

> In 1940, world events were ripping apart lives of children. In 1960, kids knew that their parents had fought in terrible wars for or against terrible dictators, that science had invented H-bombs, and that computers might well empower Big Brother. In 1980, the world was full of family and economic turmoil—overshadowed by a Cold War threat from two superpowers who had enough warheads to destroy the world in fifteen minutes. But today, the world's children pay little mind to those old anxieties. They're growing up in a different time. (Strauss and Howe 2000, 288)

Millennials have come of age in an era of "of instantaneous global communications, media saturation, and material excess" (Omeila 1998, 17). Tapscott (1998, 92) describes Millennials as "a confident generation who think highly of themselves." In essence, the world to the Millennials is a smaller, better place with a brighter future than that of their parents.

They are a generation focused on self-improvement, or becoming more marketable, or competitive. This focus partly explains the Millennials' huge attraction to higher education. They know, from day one, that to compete you have

to seek self-improvement—primarily, though not completely—through education. They will become a generation of life-long learners.

Here again, teens echo the same thoughts about being confident and optimistic regarding the future. Their comments are as follows:

We are more confident.

[We have] more opportunities.

We all want to achieve something.

We are optimistic about the future that things will keep getting better.

We think about the future more.

(5) Pressured/Impatient. Millennials are described as "hooked on the Internet." According to Moniz (2000, 22), "with instant access to information, members of Gen Y crave immediate feedback, often challenge things they are told, and can't stand to be away from their computers for very long." The "light speed" of the Internet tends to make Millennials likewise think and act in "light speed." One author describes them as "pressured for time," with "their afternoons and weekends...taken over by chess clubs, soccer, tennis, piano lessons, and karate" (Primedia 1999, 34). Strauss (2000), describes Millennials as "teens stressed and under intense pressure." Still, Moniz (2000, 22) quotes a Millennial describing his generation as "less patient," wanting "information fast." Pressure from school and parents was one of the most dominant themes when teens were asked in focus groups, "What has shaped your generation?" Teens responded as follows:

We are under more pressure, a lot more rules.

[There is so much] pressure to succeed.

[There is] constant competition in school and sports. You always have to be at your best.

We are under so much pressure.

[There is so much] pressure and expectations [for us].

[There is so much] societal pressures to get a good job, [such] high expectations.

[There is so much] pressure from our parents.

[We are] pressured, pressured, pressured.

[There is so much] pressure from educational competition.

We are impatient. We want everything now.

Closely related to "pressure," Millennials almost universally feel a need to succeed. This theme was surprisingly dominant across all focus groups. When asked to describe their generation or their "generational values," teens in focus groups responded as follows:

[We are] expected to succeed, go to college.

[The pursuit of] success; pursuit of education.

Grow up; be, like, a productive member of society. Don't be a bum.

[The] pursuit of success.

[The] pursuit of education and success.

The need to succeed.

(6) Team-orientated. A hallmark of the Millennial generation is their sense of community or team orientation. They are the generation that experienced a major expansion of youth team sports in the 1980s and 1990s. Youth soccer, tee-ball, basketball, baseball, softball, and hockey programs expanded significantly with the arrival of the Millennial generation. This is especially true for girls of the Millennial generation, who experienced a virtual explosion of new sports programs in communities and schools through "Title Nine" requirements. As Strauss and Howe (2000, 8, 216) observe, "from school uniforms to team learning to community service, Millennials are gravitating toward group activity." Further, as they write: "A new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of collegial (rather than individual) action, supporting (rather than resisting) civic institutions." "Gen Y is used to playing and working in groups," Johnson (1999, 2) adds.

According to UCLA's annual survey of first-year college students, a record number of freshmen in 1999—75 percent—reported volunteering for something during their last year of high school. The motives of some may not be not be completely altruistic, since college admission offices currently emphasize community service and some high schools even require it for graduation. (Harris 2000, 19) Interestingly, as Wendy Bounds (2000, B1) writes: "The current generation appears to be more community-orientated than Gen Xers, in part perhaps because they don't feel cheated by society."

Teens in focus groups often described themselves as more team-oriented with the following comments:

Everyone kind of comes together better.

We value teamwork more.

[We have] more community interaction.

(7) Conventional/Traditional. Teens may appear to be more liberal than their parents or grandparents; however, looks can be deceiving. According to one observer: "Young people today may appear to be more liberal than their elders—with blue hair, nose rings and rap music—but their tastes in fashion do not necessarily mirror their political views" (Florida 2000). The article, (Who Are These Kids? Primedia Company Promo, July 1999) describes Millennials as follows: "They care, are optimistic, embrace traditional values of home, family life, community and education." A *New York Times*/CBS News poll reports that today's teens are "more worldly in ways previous generations were not, but sharing most of the values and sensibilities of earlier times" (Zoba 1999, 56).

Millennials appear to be conservative on specific issues. For example, in 1972, 10.4 percent of 18-24 year olds surveyed said it was wrong to have sex before marriage. In 1998, the number rose to 23.3 percent, suggesting a rise toward more conservative values (Stapinski 1999, 2). The conservatism of Millennials is especially evident in their positions on key social issues: nearly two-thirds of those interviewed in a study said they favored a law requiring women under 18 to notify their parents before getting an abortion. Thirty percent said they would use the national budget surplus to pay down the debt, while only 20 percent said they would spend it on domestic programs, and about 75 percent approved of tax-subsidized vouchers for children to attend private schools. (Miller 2000, 4)

On the other hand, some notable exceptions to the conservative trend were also found: two-thirds said gays should be admitted to the military, and more Millennials favored passing new gun control laws rather than enforcing existing laws more strictly. In keeping with these preferences, more than two-thirds of the survey respondents described themselves as generally conservative or moderate, while less than one-third identified themselves as generally liberal. (Miller 2000, 4) Yet, as one observer points out: "Of the 4,500 students at Lehigh [school cited in article], there are 100 conservatives, 200 liberals and 4,200 people who don't give a damn." (Miller 2000, 4)

Strauss and Howe (2000, 188) report: "Millennials overwhelmingly favor the teaching of values in schools—including honesty, caring, moral courage, patriotism, democracy, and the golden rule." At the same time, Zoba (1999, 63) observes: "Young Americans are changing the direction of temperance resulting in a massive unprecedented shift in the psychological center of gravity; decreasing crime rates, lowering of divorce rates, reduction in teen drug and alcohol use, and a significant drop in teen pregnancy."

Few teens would describe their generation as conventional or traditional. However, their responses to "What are your generational values?" give insight to this core characteristic. Teens responded as follows:

> [We are] more religiously orientated.
>
> [We value] being with family [more].
>
> People are more religious.

[We value] the respect and tightness of our families [more].

We have like a world religion, I don't know.

Religion [seems to have] more emphasis.

[There] seems to be more emphasis on morals.

Family and religion [are more important].

[There is] more emphasis on morality.

(8) Skeptical. Skeptical or suspicious, teens will typically question everything and accept nothing at face value. One teen even suggested: "Because we have access to more information, we tend to question everything." Perhaps Millennials are even conditioned to question everything because of the Internet. Wendy Zoba (1999, 17) suggests teens are suffering from "generational disorientation" because of the hypocrisy they see in the world. Obviously, if one were held to a different standard than the rest of society, one would become skeptical. When teens in focus groups were asked, "What are your generational values, attitudes or beliefs?" or, "What has shaped you as a generation?," they responded with the following comments that indicate skepticism:

Bill Clinton and everything he has gotten away with.

Because we have access to more information, we tend to question everything.

Our generation is more aware of the crap that goes along with politics and the exploitation we do to other countries. Our generation does not want to be part of that.

> There are so many underhanded things going on with the government—I wouldn't want to be a part of that [teen was referring to why he would not want to join the military].

(9) Tolerant/Open-Minded. Ample evidence shows that teens are tolerant of differences in people. For example, Tapscott (1998, 69) finds that Millennials are "tolerant of racial and ethnic differences." In addition, "many N-geners believe that their global awareness will lead to a population that is more tolerant." O'Reilly (2000, 145) adds that "a surprisingly number of teens seem to feel racism is much less of a problem than it used to be." And, as another source states: "Trend forecasters say that besides being technologically savvy, this generation is growing up environmentally sensitive, achievement-oriented and far more tolerant of racial and ethnic differences" (Trends 1998, 6). Here again, teens in focus groups supported the findings in the literature. When teens in focus groups were asked, "What are your generational values, attitudes or beliefs?," they tended to respond as follows:

> [We are] more tolerant of racial and ethnic differences.
>
> Racial issues don't really matter. Interracial relationships are no big deal. It still shocks our parents.
>
> We are more tolerant toward differences.
>
> Race and ethnicity don't matter as much anymore.

(10) Materialistic. Millennials are the most affluent generation of youth in history. One source claims that each Millennial spends about $4,500 annually with money from a part-time job or an allowance (Cullen 1997). The Millennial generation, often referred to as having the richest teenagers ever, attract much attention from retailers because of their huge spending power: "Marketers salivate over

Gen Y because of their gargantuan spending power—120 billion a year," or equivalent to 40 percent of the DoD budget (Neuborne 1999, 83). Another source estimates Millennial purchasing power at 141 billion and that about 40 percent of 18 to 19 year olds have their own credit cards. (McGann 1999) As Strauss and Howe (2000, 20) point out, "kids today are growing up in houses with fifty percent more things (measured by pound) than houses did twenty years ago." More teens now "own cars than ever before, often purchased entirely at their parents' expense;" and 76 percent of teens have their own rooms, half with cable and 42 percent with a phone extension (Strauss and Howe 2000, 272). "The millennium class may be materialistic and politically apathetic," writes Wendy Harris (2000), "but they care about the environment and their communities...."

Millennials seem to have more than any previous generation, and perhaps this allows them to focus more than it allowed their generational predecessors on non-materialistic issues and concerns, and more on the future than the present. Millennials will readily admit to being materialistic. As several teens in focus groups stated, "we are materialistic."

C. WHAT MILLENNIALS THINK

The number-one goal for almost all Millennials is a well-paying job. This goal tends to drive their belief structure. "The number one objective for Gen Y," according to the article, "Who Are These Kids?" (Primedia Company Promo, July 1999) "is a well paying job (81 percent); that desire is followed at 77 percent by having people's respect and having a good relationship with parents." On the other hand, Millennials feel some of the most troubling social problems facing our country are the media and personal behavior. Forty-four percent of Millennials list the entertainment media as one of the

worst problems facing the country, along with selfish people (56 percent), people with no respect for authority (52 percent), and parents who do not discipline their children (47 percent).

Furthermore, a poll conducted by the *New York Times* reports the following: 51 percent of teens say that they get along with their parents "very well" and 46 percents say "fairly well;" and 50 percent of teens say that they trust the government (Landu 2000). Another poll, conducted by Northwestern Mutual, reports: 68 percent of teens have trust in their parent's generation: 79 percent trust their grandparents' generation; and 74 percent agreed with the statement, "I'd be willing to fight for my country." (Landu 2000)

On the subject of marriage, Millennials appear to adhere to old-fashioned values: four out of five say that they want to get married, if they can find the right person. In contrast, only 69 percent of teens in Gen X had the same view. Indeed, one survey suggests that today's teens will likely marry younger and have bigger families than in the previous generation. (Stapinski 1999, 2) At the same time, a relatively larger proportion—53 percent of girls and 41 percent of boys—claims that premarital sex is "always wrong" (Landu 2000). This is interesting, given that their parents, mostly Baby Boomers, are credited with having started the "sexual revolution."

Tapscott (1998, 9) observes that Millennials are "more knowledgeable than other previous generations and care deeply about social issues, believe strong individual rights such as privacy and rights to information, and generational learning." At the same time, Strauss and Howe (2000, 24) comment on the Millennials' grand sense of optimism: "In some ways they are as wholesome and devoid of cynicism as the generation that wore

saddle shoes. They trust their government, admire their parents, and believe it is possible to start out poor and become rich."

Teens today tend to be conservative in their political views but generally apathetic toward politics itself. According to a poll released by Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, "a majority of the young people interviewed in the nationwide survey revealed themselves conservative in their choice of political party, presidential candidate and positions on the issues. At the same time, however, they said they felt disconnected from the political process...." (Miller 2000, 4)

1. Family and Friends are Important

Previous research suggests that teens today put extraordinary value on friendships and family. According to one authority: "Second only to their value on families is the value Gen Y places on friendship. Teens have developed extraordinarily close bonds with one another. They are people who care passionately about each other." (O'Reilly 2000, 148) Some feel that teens have developed these close bonds with each other either because their parents have tended to be absent, or because of dual careers, or broken homes, and therefore turn to each other for more mutual support. Moran (2000, 5) for example, points to changing family dynamics as a major influence on the social behavior of Millennials:

> Gen Y kids, for example; often come from single-parent households, either because their parents are divorced or because their parents never married in the first place. Such trends put an odd twist on family dynamics. Many members of Gen Y consider themselves to have four parents (mom, stepdad, dad and stepmom). But smaller family size means they have far fewer siblings than previous generations did.

2. Race is Not an Issue

For most Millennials, racial differences are not a big deal. They view these differences much as they view shoe size: everyone wears shoes but has a different size. A much bigger divide today is socioeconomic class. (Strauss 2000) Teens today tend to view each other more according to socioeconomic class than race or gender. According to Strauss and Howe (2000, 218), ethnic diversity has come to replace differences based on race, and the range of possibilities has widened considerably in the world of today's teens: "Millennials are the least likely to define themselves in terms of race; white or black. To Millennials, diversity does not mean black or white, it means Korean, Malaysian, Latvian, Guatemalan, Peruvian, Nigerian, Trinidadian, and skins in more hues from places than seen on any generations in any society in the history of humanity." Strauss and Howe (2000, 219) further add: "In their eyes, race has become so fluid, complex, and multifaceted that the old answers seem less persuasive, the old struggles less purposeful, and the old racial equations less relevant." Millennials thus tend to discount racial differences and accept their peers based on who they are personally.

3. Attitudes Toward Employment

Some experts (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 11) claim that the Millennials' higher education aspirations have led to "unrealistic expectations for compensation and workplace responsibility." The ramifications for military recruiting are obvious, since the military has low starting pay and a hierarchal promotion system where everyone starts at the bottom. Millennials work place demands are described as follows: access to technology; high compensation; responsibilities; information and continuous learning opportunities; and flexible work locations and hours. (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 12)

Moreover, unlike previous generations, Millennials "do not envision any difficulty in combining career success with personal life mostly due to their expectations regarding technology" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 12).

Birnbaum et al. (2000, 13) predict that Millennials (whom they call Generation Y and Z) will have little tolerance for boredom or repetition; they will expect flexibility in educational opportunities, workplace work hours, and team projects; they will be less social, in general; they will emphasize job security; and they will embrace continuous learning. Although, the military exhibits some of these qualities, such as job security and flexibility in educational opportunities, many are antithetical to military life. Boredom or repetition and inflexibility in the workplace and work hours, for example, are a lasting aspect of service culture.

Three themes emerge that influence Millennial job satisfaction: "education and continuous learning opportunities, flexibility, and appreciation for employees' quality of life." (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 18) At present, private industry appears to be meeting the needs of the Millennials in the workplace much better than is the military.

4. Their Only Rally Cry

Rebels without a clue? Perhaps. However, the one cause that Millennials seem to care about most passionately is the environment. According to Harris (2000, 43): "This generation does not appear to have many common social causes to rally behind - other than the environment. The one issue I see them get excited about is the environment." Likewise, Strauss and Howe (2000, 86) echo this finding: "Five out of every six Millennials believe their generation has the greatest duty to improve the environment."

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The social, economic, and political issues of the day define generations. The Millennial generation has not faced much adversity or sacrifice as a group. The very absence of these factors shapes their belief structure and defines their generation through a common experience, albeit a positive one. They are a generation predicted to achieve great things by a host of scholars. Their sheer size, economic clout, family dynamics, diversity, and affluence will continue to characterize and empower them. Their generational core characteristics are a by-product of the environment that has shaped them.

The Millennials are described in one source as exhibiting "a remarkable combination of the idealism of the Boomers and the confidence of the Generation Xers" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 13). This idea seems to capture them. Much of the "personality" of the Millennials can be attributed to the excesses of Generation X and Baby Boomers, and the present desire of most of today's parents, Boomers, to correct the errors of the past. Millennial attitudes and beliefs are a radical departure from past generations: they appear more conservative and "old-fashioned." They care passionately about family, friends, and the environment. Moreover, the age-old problem of race appears as not a concern of most Millennials.

Millennials now are only defined by their birth right; however, in time they will be defined by their deeds— perhaps much like the GI generation of World War II. They are a generation celebrated, revered, and blessed with the labors of generations past.

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IV. INFLUENCES SHAPING THE MILLENNIALS

A. FORCES OF INFLUENCE

From most accounts, the Millennial generation is unlike any previous generation in terms of values, beliefs, and attitudes. Integration of the literature review and focus group results suggest five forces that have operated to shape this generation: their parents, technology, the New Economy, education, and the media. These five forces are interrelated, complementary, and synergistic, as graphically depicted below.

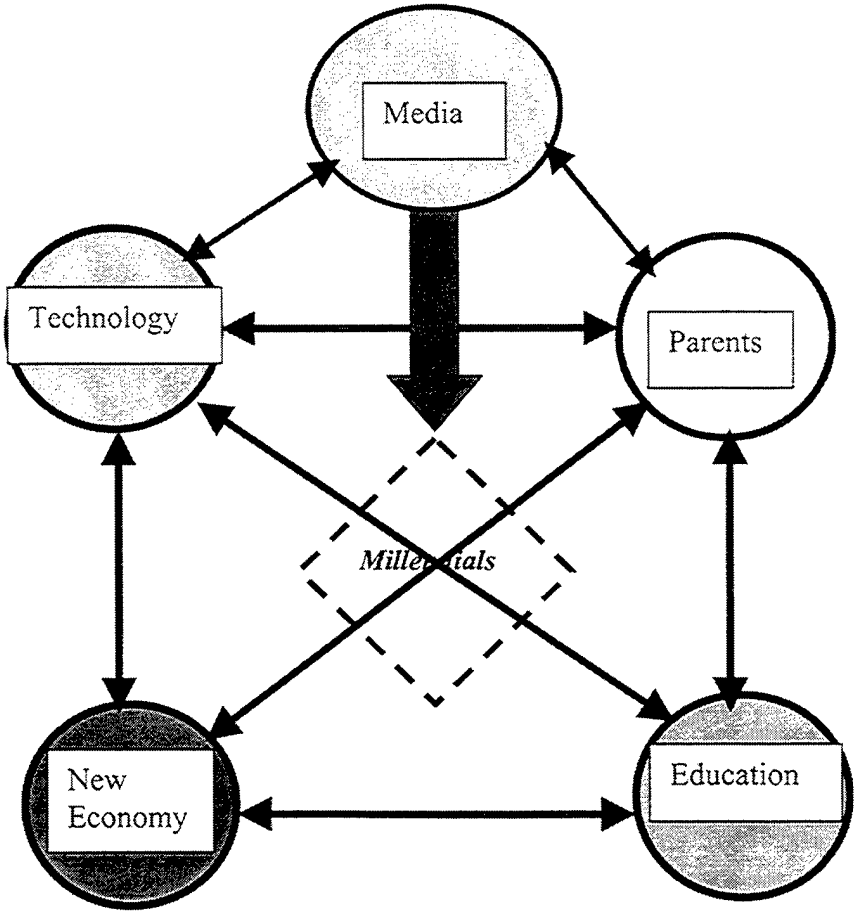

Figure 1. Millennial Culture Model

1. Overview of Cultural Model: An Inter-Connected Relationship

The five factors of influence are connected in several ways. For example, the rise in technology is driving the "New Economy" by creating productivity increases for American workers. Technology's reciprocal relationship with the New Economy in turn generates increased capital, encouraging further technological development. The economy is fueling the draw to higher education by widening the pay gap between high school graduates and college graduates. And the economy's demand for college graduates continues to grow, spurring record enrollments at institutions of higher learning.

Today's parents are demanding higher standards from schools, which is the catalyst for the so-called education revolution. Almost 90 percent of parents today expect their children to go to college—driving increased attendance at postsecondary institutions. (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 5) Parents have a keen understanding of the economic returns to a college education. Like their parents, teens believe the only route to a good job in the economy is with a college degree. This rise in college attendance is also affected by the economy's need for better-educated, technologically savvy workers.

Parents and teens alike believe that, along with a college education, embracing technology is the key to increasing human capital. Therefore, parents are quick to purchase any technology that will give their children an academic edge or enhance their child's grasp of technology. The resulting demand for high-tech gadgetry and systems thus partially feeds the technological revolution that drives the economy. Beck (1997, 4) comments on this relationship and its link to Millennials:

> Boomer compulsion to give their kids and educational edge is fueling the booming business of 'educational playthings' sold by national retail chains like Noodle Kidoodle and Zany Brainy. Brian Lynch, VP of Learningsmith, a chain of 36 stores says 'quite frankly, the belief that consumers can't spend enough time with their children, and when they do, they want it to be something that will help them get into Harvard.'

Education is being shaped by Millennials as much as it is shaping them. In computer-related activities, today's youth are often the teacher to the teachers. In response to demands of parents and Millennials, the primary focus in most schools today seems to be preparation for college.

The impact of the media on today's youth cannot be overstated. The Millennial generation saw the inception of *CNN* and *USA Today*, news, and information sources that rely on both quick and condensed messages. Flashes of information are provided worldwide with an economy of detail. For their entire lives, Millennials have had instantaneous, constant media exposure. Advances in technology encourage the exposure of the media to today's youth. The computer and the Internet, for example, have accelerated the speed and ubiquity of the media's influence.

Technology, parents' interests, the so-called education revolution, the ever-present media, and the new economy are working in unison to influence and shape the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of the Millennial generation, America's next youth culture. Understanding the impact of each of these forces, as illustrated by the results of the focus groups used in this study and the extensive literature presented on the Millennial generation, allow us to better comprehend the "external" forces that affect military recruiting efforts.

B. BOOMER PARENTS

When asked, "What are your generational characteristics?" or, "What shaped you as a generation?," teens tended to respond as follows in the focus groups:

> Our parents are overprotective [and] we are sheltered.
>
> Our parents are overprotective.
>
> We are codependent on the protected sheltered lifestyle our parents provide us.
>
> We've sort a of been babied by our parents.
>
> Our parents have given us so much more than they ever had.
>
> Our parents, we are sheltered [from so many things].
>
> There is so much pressure from our parents.
>
> My dad used to mow the lawn, clean the garage and ask for $2.00 to go to the movies. We ask our parents for movie money and we get $20.00 without doing anything.
>
> [We] rely to heavily on technology and parents' money.
>
> [Our] parents and international events [have influenced us].
>
> Dual parents working [have influenced us].
>
> We want to be more independent rather than have someone control everything. Our parents are too controlling.
>
> [Our] parents and the way they want us to be [have influenced us].
>
> We have had more opportunities, [it is] easier to go to college, [to] participate in sports. [Our] parents give us more.

One high school teacher described teens' independence through their relationships with their parents:

> Kids don't value the relationship they have with their parents. The way they talk to their parents would not have been tolerated in my generation. I would have never said the things to my parents that kids say to their parents today. They seem to show such little courtesy and respect to teachers and parents. They [teens] seem to believe they have so many rights.

Millennial attitudes toward the military are in many ways affected by the views of their parents, who grew up during the period of the Vietnam War and the early years of the All-Volunteer Force. As one observer states: "You've got a bunch of people out there from the '60's; the anti-war people and so forth that now have teenagers. These kids are being raised differently" (Mayfield 2000, 4). A common observation of Boomer parents is that they tend to exert incredible pressure on their children, to the point of making them "trophy kids": "Millennials are under severe stress, from their boomer parents desperate to raise trophy kids with perfect grades, drop dead resumes and early admission to Harvard" (O'Reilly 2000, 145). Millennial parents are said to be unlike their own parents; they are strict, demanding, and highly involved with their children:

> Parents of the 80s and 90s are much like the parents of the 20s who produced the World War II generation—the most successful generation in our history.... Strauss and Howe theorize that at the start of the 1980s, there was a radical back shift away from the notion of the careerist mom and the two-income family as acceptable child-rearing situations. This has led to a softening of job ambitions and acquisitiveness—the beneficial, Millennials. (Debrosse 2000, E1)

Millennials also perceive that their parents as overly strict with them. And their chief complaint with both their parents and their schools is "hypocrisy—they are being held to higher standard than any one else" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 177).

Interestingly, and perhaps even ironic, Boomer parents are said to be protective and controlling of their kids, even though their own youth culture was aimed so strongly at creating freedoms. Generational scholars claim this is a normal effect, a normal swing of values from one generation to the next. Millennials have grown up protected in some ways, but not in many others. The media (discussed below) has actually stripped away many of the protections of youth.

The shift in approach toward parenting is influenced to some extent by the social upheavals of the preceding generation, Gen X. Generation X parents have been called the "Silent Generation," whose parenting style is in stark contrast to that of Baby Boomers:

> Silent style child rearing, which dominated parental guidebooks and education from the mid 1960s to the mid 1980s, stressed feelings, total tolerance for every behavior, and conflict avoidance at all cost. Boomer-style parenting only became ascendant since the mid 1980s, and Boomers are not at all afraid of conflict: Zero tolerance, school uniforms, teamwork, harsher punishments, expectations of high achievement are all evidence of the changeover. (Libengood 2000)

In this respect, Strauss and Howe (2000, 105) add: "In the 1980's there was a sense that adult need for self-actualization trumped children's needs. Now, I think the cultural value of parental altruism, of sacrificing for kids, may be returning."

Many of today's "influencers"—parents, other relatives, and educators—apparently do not regard a military career as "successful." Moreover, most of these "influencers" are Boomers. In fact, in the words of one educator interviewed for this study, "the military is for second-tier students—our students are going to college." Because of influencers' own lack of knowledge, teens today know almost nothing about

military service. Remarkably, some teenagers even wonder if they can "eat chicken or drive cars" while in the military (Jaffe 2000). This ignorance of the military and generally negative view operates to steer today's kids away from even considering military service as a career option. And a large part of influencers' views can be said to relate to their own inexperience with the military.

For many male Boomers, avoidance of the draft and the war in Vietnam was valued more highly than participation. Young women during the period before the end of the draft comprised just a fraction of the military. In addition, when the draft ended—along with the war in Vietnam—the size of the military force was reduced along with opportunities for service. Combine this with lack of "war stories around the dinner table," and the Millennials' exposure to the military is practically nil.

One source in particular notes: "Fathers as an agent of influence with military experience dropped from 55 percent to 27 percent from 1994 to 1995, and this drop roughly corresponds with a twenty-year period after the end of the draft" (Shumate 1999, 85). As previously discussed, the "knowledge void" with today's youth is directly related to their parents' lack of military experience or lingering views from the Vietnam era. Indeed, Millennials represent the first generation in quite some time whose fathers did not face military conscription:

> Today's youth are the first generation in over fifty years whose fathers never had to face [universal] conscription. And according to recruiters, many parents tend to push their children in the direction of college and civilian careers, portraying the military less as a stepping-stone than a stumbling block. If this trend or perception holds true for most parents and continues into the future, the viability of an all-volunteer military force for the US may be in grave danger. (Shumate 1999, 186)

Interestingly, Boomers' attitudes toward today's military tend to be generally positive, trusting it above any government entity—yet, it's another matter when it comes to their "trophy" kids serving in the military. The legacy of Vietnam may still haunt some Boomers, who recognize the importance of the military but shun any personal involvement even through their children. Yet, as one writer observes: "There appears to be general support from all agencies of socialization, except mothers, for military service, even when youth were unlikely to enlist or disinterested in joining the military—suggesting that military service retains some degree of stature among the general public" (Shumate 1999, 185).

Juxtaposed to the above notion are the sheltered, protected lives parents have provided their kids. Today's parents will apparently not accept any level of personal risk for their children. This is evidenced by the prevalence of child safety devices targeted for Millennials: bike helmets, rollerblade knee pads, kiddy gates, child harnesses, baby backpacks, car safety locks, car seats, drawer latches, stove knob covers, electrical outlet covers, intercom devices, toilet locks, corner cushions on furniture, and so on. "Since the early 1980s, there has been a national obsession with children and child safety, and it all started with the infamous 'Baby on Board' signs appearing in car windows" (Debrosse 1998, E4).

As Gilbert Chan (1999, 6) writes: "Those born in the early eighties have been privileged and sheltered by doting, overprotective parents. It has often been called 'attachment parenting' where the child is the center of the universe." Chan adds that, "one corporate recruiter noted 'more than once, students have delayed a response to a job offer until they have consulted with their parents.'" Another source describes the

relationship parents have with their children as follows: "In the early eighties, while educators complained of demoralized teachers and apathetic students, new parents obsessed feverishly over their preschool 'trophy children'" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 37).

Parents of Millennials tend to enjoy and cherish their children to such a degree that they often have difficulty letting them go. In fact, many parents frequently define themselves through their children and have little to do with other adults except through their children (Strauss and Howe 2000, 110). Strauss and Howe define this as the "generation of the child." Another source describes the increased emphasis on Millennials as follows:

> The Baby Boomers are confronting the fruits of their revolution in the faces of their offspring and are becoming alarmed. And since whatever issues boomers care about influences cultural attention to those issues (for better or worse), their concern has triggered a national effort to once again strengthen parental protection. (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 143)

Millennials are not only closer with their parents; they are more dependent. As one study (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 11) observes: "Gen Y appear less independent and entrepreneurial than their older siblings in Generation X. This can be attributed to the extended transition period between childhood and economic independence that results from increased years of education." While they may have an "independent spirit," Millennials tend to be more dependent on their parents than previous generations because of the increased cost of schooling and the increased amount of education sought.

In addition to being close and overprotective with their children, parents today tend to be very demanding. They want the very best for their children and they want their children to succeed at almost any cost. Moreover, they are devoting more resources to

sending their offspring to college and are earmarking savings resources for it earlier and earlier. In 1997, Congress approved the Education Individual Retirement Account (EIRA), reflecting the increasing value of education to American society. As David Stephenson and Barbara Schneider (1999, 217), authors of *The Ambitious Generation: America's Teenagers, Motivated but Directionless,* point out: "In 1972, 55 percent of students indicated their parents wanted them to go to college. That number barely changed by 1982. However, by 1992, 76 percent of teens reported their parents expected them to earn a college degree. Now that number is upwards of 90 percent today." This point illustrates the influences of parents and education in molding the Millennials.

Baby Boomers themselves are the most educated generation in history. In fact, as Strauss and Howe (2000, 101) state, "the surge of women in the labor force, augmented by the surge in women's education has given the Millennials the best-educated mothers in US history" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 101). This fact is particularly important since it affects military recruiting.

Shumate (1999, 30) studied youth propensity to join the military in her 1999 doctoral dissertation and found that "those individuals with more educated parents are less likely to choose military service." Shumate (1999, 54) writes: "As the educational level of parents increases, there is a corresponding decrease in the likelihood of these individuals enlisting in the military. This finding may be the result of the parents' experiences during the Vietnam era in which the majority of the protests against the war were taking place at universities around the country." Shumate's (1999, 184) findings also indicate that "individuals whose parents possessed less than a high school diploma

were among the most likely to enlist in the military, while individuals whose fathers were highly educated were the least likely to join the military."

C. EDUCATION

In focus group discussions for this study, Millennials indicated that education has been an enormous influence in shaping their culture; more specifically, they cited pressure to do well in school. Teens in this study tend to agree with the increased expectations, intense pressure, and numerous rules in the education system as factors in shaping their generation. When asked, "What has shaped your generation?," teens responded as follows:

> A lot more education [is expected of you].
>
> Rising expectations [have influenced us].
>
> We're under more pressure, a lot more rules.
>
> [We are] pressured to succeed.
>
> [There is] constant competition in school and sports. You always have to be at your best.
>
> We're pounded from the day we are born to do well in school.
>
> We are under a lot of pressure in school.
>
> [We are] expected to succeed, to go to college.
>
> [We are pressured to] be successful, [to] pursue education.
>
> We've been pounded about the importance of college since day one.
>
> [There are] lots and lots of rules.
>
> [There is so much] pressure from educational competition.

> [We are] pressured, pressured, pressured.
>
> Increased standards, we don't try to slack off so much. You have to always be your best.

Education has undergone a sort of revolution in the lifetime of the Millennials. Gone are the experiments of the 1970s with open classrooms, self-expression, and relaxed standards. In fact, emphasis on education today is so strong that 61 percent of US children aged 3-5 attend some form of preschool (Trends 1998, 6). Educational institutions at the start of the 21st century are characterized by relatively high standards, personal accountability, and zero tolerance for discipline infractions. One article in the *New York Times* suggests that "the education accountability movement echoes the restructuring process American business went through in the late 1970s to address lagging productivity" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 153). Zero tolerance in schools is increasing and tends to apply further pressure on Millennials—at home as well as at school.

From grade one through high school, kids are feeling the pressure of greater expectations, higher standards, and increasing academic demands. This stress has often been called an "academic pressure cooker." Regarding the pressure placed on him to get into an Ivy League school, one Millennial observes: "That's all anybody cares about. It's like everything else about who I am and what I've done flew out the window, and now I've just got the word 'Harvard' tattooed on my forehead" (O'Reilly 2000, 145).

As a result, Teens are going to college in greater numbers than at any other time in our nation's history. Furthermore, they are considered one of the most ambitious

generations in history. "Most high school students plan to attend college," Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 31) write, "and many aspire to jobs as professionals or managers."

The US Department of Education reports that 65 percent of today's high school graduates go straight to college, up from 49 percent in 1980 (Mayfield 2000, 8). Further, more than 90 percent of high school seniors expect to attend college, while more than 70 percent expect to work in professional jobs (Stevenson and Schneider 1999). Birnbaum et al. (2000, 5) in their study, "Sailing Toward 2020: A Generational Study," report on a 1997 study by the Hudson Institute that indicates: 40 percent of jobs in America require intermediate or higher language skills; 35 percent require intermediate or higher level mathematics skills; 33 percent require high or advanced level analytical problem-solving skills. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the number of jobs requiring a bachelor's degree will increase by 25 percent by the year 2006, and jobs requiring an associate's degree will increase by 22 percent (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 6). It is not likely that education in the near future will become any less of a competitor for the military's market for potential recruits.

One can make a strong argument that higher education is now considered the chief competitor for the US military in the struggle to attract recruiting-age youth. As one report (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 6) observes, "the skill gap and increasing emphasis on education will reduce the number of qualified individuals in the military recruiting pool." The authors continue: "In 1985, the high-water mark for military defense spending and recruiting, the population of 18-24 years olds was approximately 29 million, of which 27.8 percent were enrolled in post-secondary institutions. By 1996, the population cohort had decreased to less than 25 million, of which over 36 percent were pursuing higher

education degrees." In addition, according to a 1999 published report from the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), high school graduates who do not go to college soon after graduating constitute the majority of the recruiting market. (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 6)

The strong draw to college is largely due to expectations regarding anticipated increases in earning power. The wages paid to college graduates far exceed those paid to high school graduates, and that gap has continued to widen. Indeed, as a report by the RAND Corporation states:

> Competition in the civilian labor market has increased the demand for workers with a college degree. This rise in demand for more-educated workers and decline in the relative demand for workers with less education have caused an in increase in the wages for college education relative to high school education. The premium paid for college education rose from 40% in 1979 to 65 % in 1995—and it is continuing to rise. (Asch, Kilburn, Klerman 1999, xii)

The New Economy reinforces now, more than ever before, the understanding that a college education increases lifetime family earnings. This increased demand for a college education, combined with the fact that wages of college graduates have continued to rise, implies that the demand for education has outstripped the supply. Until market equilibrium is reached, college will continue to be the military's chief competitor for new recruits.

Teenagers appear to recognize the volatility of the labor market and believe that the way to create a personal "safety net" is to obtain additional education. As Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 55) observe, "such human capital perspective undergirds their educational ambitions." One of the Marine Corps' top recruiters adds: "Kids spend most

of their time around educators who view education as a means to an end" (Macmillan 2000).

Not only are more teens going to college today than ever before, it is where and how youth are deciding to matriculate that have also changed. Opportunities for college today have never been better, thanks in part to increased affluence and growth in secondary education institutions. Almost all teens today live within commuting distance of a community or junior college. As one source reports:

> For the current generation, the creation and expansion of the federal student loan programs provide needed financial assistance. The growth of higher-education institutions, in particular the creation of community colleges, permitted more students to attend college as commuting or part time students. (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 29)

These very individuals going to junior colleges may represent a rich target market for military recruiting. Individuals who attend a two-year institution assume more of the economic burden for school, are failing to complete a college degree in greater numbers, and are taking longer if they do complete a degree. Consider the following:

> Those attending two-year institutions assume more of the economic burden of school then those attending four-year institutions (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 257).

> Many college bound youth drop out of school and fail to complete their education. For example, of those freshmen males who started in the 1989-1990 school year, 49.1 percent of those in a two-year program had neither attained a degree nor were enrolled by 1994. For those in a four-year program, this figure is 30.9% (Asch, Kilburn, Klerman 1999, 17).

> In 1972, 20 percent of those who entered a two-year institution failed to earn a college degree. In 1982, that number rose to 38 percent. Since the mid 80s the time it takes for college student to earn a bachelor's degree has increased. In 1989, 34 percent finished in 4 years and another 24 percent finished the following year. This means that just over 40 percent

of students do not finish a college degree five years after starting. (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 217, 219).

Further, the 2000-2001 high school graduating class is forecasted to number 2.9 million. Almost 2/3 of the class (63 percent or 1.8M) is expected to go to college and 1.1 million are anticipated to go into the workforce. Of the portion going to college, 67 percent (1.2M) are expected to attend a four-year institution and 291,000 are projected to drop out. The remaining 33 percent (.6M) are forecasted to go to a 2-year college, of which 274,000 are estimated to drop out. (Ross 2001)

Certainly, the dynamics of the education system have changed: more rules, increased pressure, and greater expectations. Teens today have different views about college, and they are under more pressure to both attend college and to succeed. Not only are more teens going to college, but how and where they are going has also changed dramatically. At the same time, however, opportunities are present that could complement the military's recruiting efforts.

D. THE NEW ECONOMY

Teens who participated in this study claimed that the economy had a significant impact in shaping their generation and culture. When asked, "What forces have shaped and influenced your generation?" a number of teens responded as follows:

The good economy [has influenced us].

The wealth of our country and the good economy [has influenced us].

Our lack of exposure to adversities and hardships [has influenced us].

Good times, the peace, and prosperity [has influenced us].

We are well to do and we don't want to lose that wealth.

We've had it pretty cooch growing up; parents looking out for us, no wars, a good economy, no depressions.

The economy has always been good.

We have plenty of job opportunities.

The peace and prosperity we have had [have influenced us].

A lifetime of steady economic growth has certainly contributed to shaping the Millennial generation (Chambers 2000, 9). Specifically, three effects of the "New Economy" have exerted tremendous influence on today's teens: uninterrupted growth, abundant career opportunities, and increased economic rewards for education (Chambers 2000, 9). The Millennial generation, with its first birth year in 1981, began at the same time as America's unprecedented, 18-year economic expansion (overlooking a mild setback in the early 1990s). As a result, this generation has known unusual economic prosperity, including low unemployment. (Chambers 2000, 9) Economic recession is a concept as foreign to today's kids as the Internet was to Boomers in their youth. *Fortune* magazine explains the impact of the New Economy on the Millennials as follows: "They seem to assume that jobs and money will be available as needed, which allows them to indulge in luxury that few of their parents could or would—when they are married with a family, one of the parents will be able to stay home and raise the children" (O'Reilly 2000, 145).

The New Economy has also altered the way many Millennials view the military. The security and insulation from the cyclical economy may no longer be an attractive feature of military service. As Chambers (2000, 9) observes: "The cyclical vicissitudes

of the old economy influenced many in previous generations to make the military a career. The security of a military career is no longer an enticement. The next generation will not base their decision whether to join the military on the old economic framework."

Many of the military's current recruiting difficulties "reflect relatively recent and possibly temporary changes in the enlisted recruiting environment" (Chambers 2000, 9). For example, the civilian labor market is currently experiencing an expansion that has caused the unemployment rate to fall from 7.3 percent in January 1992 to 4.7 percent in January 1998 (Asch, Kilburn, Klerman 1999, xi). On the other hand, some research suggests "little association between rates of unemployment among unskilled males and rates of enlistment, and rejects the hypothesis that young men undecided about their long-range vocational future are more likely to enlist." Further, "several econometric models have argued that propensity to serve in the military is driven by the civilian unemployment rate, although the empirical evidence is not conclusive" (Shumate 1999, 7).

According to Chambers (2000, 10), an economist at West Point, the effect of the New Economy is that "the unprecedented and possible unending prosperity in the civilian sector combined with a commonly accepted notion of an ill-defined post Cold War military role, a decreased propensity to enlist and lower societal esteem afforded to military service have the potential to forever change the service and how we recruit." Chambers further argues that the "effects are manifestations of a fundamental change in risk-reward perceptions of civilian versus military careers." Consequently, "the issue is changing expectations of lifetime risk-reward perceived by the younger generation.

Civilian careers are less risky and offer greater total rewards than the military service." (Chambers 2000, 10)

The economy is tied to the increased demand for college education and, at the same time, prosperity is providing more parents with increased resources to send their children to college. With this in mind, the recruiting promise of "money for college" may no longer be relevant. Historically, money for education has been the number-one attraction for enlistment. With this attraction now much less important, interest in military service is waning. The Department of Defense reports that, in 1990, 32 percent of young men between the ages 16-21 years were interested in active-duty service; that number has decreased to 26 percent in 1998, and it continues to decline. (Thompson 1999, 15)

It is quite possible that the philosophy of selling educational benefits in exchange for military service is outdated. When access to higher education is in relatively great supply, the military may need to emphasize what is apparently in short supply—the opportunity for challenge, discipline, adventure, and character-building.

E. TECHNOLOGY

Technology, more than any other factor, appears to have significantly influenced the Millennial culture. Not surprisingly, teens tended to agree with this hypothesis. Again, when teens were asked, "What are the forces that have shaped and molded your generation?," they responded as follows:

> If you don't grow with the technology, you aren't really going to make it.
>
> Technology and the Internet [has influenced us].

The ability to access information [has influenced us].

Internet [has influenced us], we can get pretty much anything we want by sitting behind a computer.

Internet [has influenced us], the world is getting smaller.

Digital Stuff [has influenced us].

We have more power at our fingertips.

According to one writer, "Aside from their parents, Millennials credit pop music and, more importantly, computers as their chief influencers" (Debrosse 1998, E1). The information revolution and the advent of the Internet are forces that have empowered and dramatically shaped the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the Millennial generation. As Azoulay (1999, 22) writes: "Gen Y has absorbed the 'me' sense of fluidity that digital media provides. [They are] confident, self-reliant, optimistic, and positive, the fluency with digital media has created a pathway to identity. Computers have made knowledge cool through a fusion of fun and learning."

According to a *Newsweek* poll, "89 percent of teens use a computer at least several times a week, 61 percent surf the Internet, 92 percent think computers will improve their educational opportunities, 71 percent would prefer to talk into their computers rather than type, and 98 percent credit computers with making a positive impact in their lives" (reported by Zoba 1999, 95). One report (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 10) observes: "Gen Yers have had Internet access through both primary and secondary education and by the end of 1999 approximately 96 percent of all public schools in the US had Internet access."

Millennials, because of technology, have often been described as possessing a great ability for multitasking—capable of watching television, listening to the radio, playing computer games, and chatting on line—all at the same time. According to Birnbaum et al. (2000, 11), Millennials are "capable of accepting, sifting through, and processing mass amounts of information at a rapid pace...and as a result, have short attention spans and a strong desire for big picture information."

Most parents of Millennials were also greatly influenced by technology, particularly television, which requires the watcher to receive, rather than interact. Interaction with digital media, however, is having a different impact on Millennials than television had on their parents:

> These latter technologies (radio, TV, printing press) are unidirectional and controlled by adults. They are very hierarchical, inflexible, and centralized. Not surprisingly, they reflect the values of their adult owners. By contrast, the new media is interactive, malleable, and distributed in control. As such it cherishes much greater neutrality. The media will do what we command of them. And at this moment, tens of millions of N-geners around the world are taking over the steering wheel. This distinction is at the heart of the new generation. For the first time ever, children are taking control of critical elements of a communication revolution. (Tapscott 1998, 26)

The use of interactive digital media is exercising the most significant influence on the development of the Millennials' culture. Using technology has become a way of life: recent marketing studies show that high school graduates tend to have their own e-mail addresses and rely significantly on pagers and cellular phones (Bower 1999, 1b).

Tapscott (1998,15) argues that digital media not only define the Millennials, but personify them: "What makes [Millennials] unique is that they are growing up in the dawn of a completely new interactive medium of communication, they are spending their

forming years in a context and environment fundamentally different from their parents." Tapscott (1998, 22), a leading expert on youth and technology, also feels that the advent of digital media and the Millennials' sheer numbers will eventually transform our society. "This wave of youth," he writes, "coincides with the digital revolution, which is transforming all facets of our society. Together these two factors are producing a generation, which is not just a demographic bulge but a wave of social transformation."

Technology seems to have created an "ambiance of arrogance" with Millennials. As one report observes, Millennials "display a blasé attitude towards technology and computer innovation." (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 11) Perhaps this is because technology is omnipresent in their lives. Several sources suggested Millennials will "demand technology in the workplace" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 110).

The ubiquitous nature of the information revolution is transforming and shaping Millennials. This generation embraces and virtually embodies technology: "As computers from your desktop to the collar of your shirt become networked, nothing less than a new medium of human communication is emerging, one that may prove to surpass all previous revolutions—the printing press, the telephone, television, the computer—in its impact on our economic and social lives." (Tapscott 1998, 24) And, it is technology itself that has enabled the media to have such a dramatic influence on today's youth.

F. THE MEDIA

In addition to the four forces previously discussed, teens also believe the media is a powerful, integral force in shaping their culture and almost as influential as technology. When asked, "What forces have shaped and molded you as a generation?," teens responded as follows:

Media shapes too much of what we learn.

The Media [has influenced us].

We are desensitized to so many things [because of the media].

The media has influenced us a lot.

The media more than anything else [has influenced us].

We are exposed to more ideas, through the Internet and TV.

Influence of media and movies [has affected us].

Several teens in this study commented that the media expose them to a diversity of controversial issues so often that they become "numb":

> We are so use to the things that go on in out society that we have become numb to things that should startle us: violence in the world, gay relationships, school shootings. We don't think as deeply about these things as we should.
>
> It seems like everything is accepted today, divorce, homosexuality—moral ambiguity.
>
> [We are] desensitized to violence—because we have been exposed to it through the media all our life.

Previous research tends to support the notion that, next to technology, the media are the most influential force in shaping the Millennial culture. Zoba (1999,42), for example, finds that "the electronic media culture has shaped the Millennial generation. It has been described by one social critic as 'inescapable, omnivorous, and self-referring'" (Zoba 1999, 42).

Stalwart media venues such as, *CNN* and *USA Today* came into being at about the same time the first Millennials were born. However, it is not just *CNN* and *USA Today*

that have influenced the Millennial culture, but the great pervasiveness of media outlets available to teens today. Technology has allowed more outlets to provide media venues. Youth now have cable TV, satellite TV, regular TV, Internet, and radio. Additionally, teens today attend movies in record numbers, partially because of increased affluence as well as the increased availability of movies and theaters. Add to this the introduction of video recording technology, which coincides with the Millennial generation—who are probably the most photographed of children—and who have easy access to films of all kinds through the video rental market. Given the availability of media outlets for Millennials, one begins to understand its powerful influence in the lives of today's teens.

The shock value of the media appears to have a significant effect on youth. Again, Zoba (1999, 20) observes: "The culture today has ratcheted up the shock level of what can be heard in our music or seen in the movies or on television. It wouldn't be so bad if these elements reflected the depravity of a clandestine underground movement. But they do not; they are part of the mainstream media." Teens credit with "desensitizing" them to violence and human suffering this very shock effect. Some have referred to this as a "numbing effect," especially present in the most popular video games, where players typically rack up points by destroying something or somebody. Zoba (999, 43) quotes a particularly insightful teen in her book on the addictive nature of the media: "The media is a drug so powerful it cultivates millions of users around the world each year and practically everyone is addicted. I know I am."

For good or bad, kids can see practically any aspect of life at the flick of a switch: pornography on the Internet, X-rated movies, or listening to words and ideas of all kinds in music. Many parents today are at war, attempting to shield their children from the

potentially harmful effects of early or unsupervised exposure to life's darker side. "The evolving media culture has led to a loss of parental control over what kids see, hear and learn about," Zoba (1999,48) observes. The important aspect for some parents is the values that the media endorses: "The media perpetuates the notion that individual human wants and freedoms are the epicenter of the cultural universe." Or: "The media culture perpetuates the notion that, we the consumers have a right to good feelings. This breeds ingratitude because life does not always translate into good feelings, and this ingratitude can devote into resentment and hostility" (Zoba 1999, 59). Zoba (1999, 50) identifies four distinct effects of the media on youth:

> Four effects the media is having on young people today is; electronic haze lulling the creative process and fragmenting thought patterns for processing information, moral ambivalence a byproduct of the consumer-orientated perceptions of the world, spiritual languishing and the distortion of what is considered normal has created a longing for meaning beyond human appetites and impulses, and lastly, a collective shift in society's psychological center of gravity.

Media forces are apparently the dominant factors in shaping youth perceptions about the military. Interestingly, youth are the first to claim they do not trust the media, yet they will attest to its value in shaping their culture. As Strauss and Howe (2000, 232) find, "Millennials are deeply distrustful of the media." During the formative years of today's teenagers, the media have tended to focus on many problems associated with the military, such as hazing, sexual harassment, readiness problems, and low pay with food stamps. In the absence of more positive portrayals during a period of sustained peace, this has not helped the military in its continuing drive to attract volunteers.

G. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Millennial model demonstrates the interplay among the five factors—education, technology, parents, the economy, and the media—and their impact on the current recruiting-age population. Because of these factors, recruiting the Millennial generation will become increasingly difficult. Boomer parents tend to have little knowledge of or direct exposure to the military experience, and a number still hold some antimilitary sentiments from the Vietnam era. They tend to be very demanding on their children, overprotective, oriented toward college, and not particularly supportive of having their "trophy children" serve in the nation's armed forces.

Demanding parents propel the profound changes in education. The result is a changing educational landscape focused on college preparation, increased standards and expectations, and zero tolerance for disciplinary infractions. Kids today have never been under more pressure to do well in school and to attend college. The returns of a college education are greater today than ever before, and the wage gap between college-educated and non-college-educated workers continues to widen. Combine the returns to a college education with increased access to higher education and one can begin to understand why college is now the military's chief competitor for potential recruits.

The New Economy has given Millennials a lifetime of unprecedented prosperity and a relatively optimistic outlook on the future. The economy is the chief instrument in providing the increased returns to a college education. Millennial parents seem keenly aware of this, and encourage their offspring to attend college in greater numbers than ever before. Because of the New Economy, the military is no longer viewed as a

"secure" and "safe" place where one can be insulated from the threat of unemployment or an economic recession.

The recent technological revolution appears to be fueling the economy. The influence of computers and the Internet are particularly strong in today's youth culture. And technology is credited as being the dominant force of influence on the Millennial culture. Technology empowers youth—enabling them to become seekers, rather than receivers, of information.

Closely related to the influence of technology is the influence of the media on the Millennial culture. The vast improvements in communications technology have enabled media outlets to exert a powerful influence on today's youth. Today, teens have instant access to information, news, pornography, video violence, and practically anything that can be seen or heard, right at their fingertips. And, most of the information the Millennials find in mass media is packaged with an economy of detail. The combination of these five forces—Boomer parents, so-called education revolution, the New Economy, the information revolution, and the ubiquitous media—have influenced the newest generation of potential recruits in many ways not seen for previous generations.

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V. YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MILITARY

A. WHY COLLEGE?

Surveys conducted during the focus groups indicate that 91 percent of teens plan to attend college after high school. The survey conducted at Monterey High School had a similar result, with 86 percent of teens planning to attend college. (See Appendix A.) These. figures may seem high, but they are very similar to findings in a study by Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 5): "Today more than 90 percent of high school seniors expect to attend college, and more than 70 percent expect to work in professional jobs." The proportion of young men and women actually attending college has risen, and so has the proportion of youth who plan to continue their education beyond college. Indeed, in FY1985, about 23 percent of youth said they wanted to go to graduate school; this figure doubled by FY1997 (Asch, Kilburn, Klerman 1999, 15).

Why is there such a draw to college and graduate school? Much has to do with the factors discussed in Chapter IV. Further, the wage differential between college graduates and high school graduates is very high and expanding. As Chambers (2000, 9) finds: "By 1997, the premium paid to those with a college education was 50 percent more than that of high school graduates, and it is likely to continue to rise." Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 257) add: "The decline in real wages for high school graduates and the growing job instability among white-collar workers has helped fuel the rise in the ambitions of adolescents and their parents' ambitions for them to go to college." They further find that a college graduate has many more options available to him or her today than ever before:

> The view that college is the route to a better paying job with a higher salary is in stark contrast to today's high school graduate that goes directly into the labor market enters an economy that offers diminished job opportunities. The increasing reliance on computers and technology, the demand for highly skilled workers, and decline of manufacturing jobs have decreased the choices available to high school graduates. And those relatively few blue-collar jobs available are difficult to obtain. (Stevenson, Schneider 1999, 57)

The increasing draw to college is also part of changing expectations as well as increased earnings. "So strongly is this opinion held," Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 33) observe, "that many believe a college degree is required for nearly all jobs, including those of security guards and actors. Teenagers today view a college degree much like teenagers in the 50s viewed a high school diploma—the necessary ticket for an entry-level job." As one high school counselor further observes: "I think that the kids are so into a head set that the only way to succeed is college that they're unrealistic about their own abilities" (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 130).

Some experts (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 11) claim that the Millennials' aspirations for higher education have led to "unrealistic expectations for compensation and workplace responsibility." The ramifications for military recruiting are obvious when one considers the structure of the military—low starting pay and a hierarchal promotion system where everyone starts at the bottom.

College today is not so much an expectation as it is a "default decision" for those who are undecided about what they want to do after high school. In generations past, this question was often answered by enlisting in the military: the military, for young men especially, was a place to "step out" and think about the future, a sort of rite of passage or bridge between adolescence and "adulthood." Herein lies the difference. Today, college

has become the holding pattern for teens who are still not sure about what to do after high school. Consider what one teen said with regard to college during a focus group: "It is the next step, the default decision." And, as another teen stated: "College is the thing to do. It's what everybody does."

When asked, "Why are you going to college?," a number of teens commented as follows:

> It is the best future.
>
> You can't make it without a college degree.
>
> It seems like fun and everybody is going.
>
> You need an education to get a good job, make money, and support children later in life. A good job is when I don't have to rely on anybody else in life.

However, the most frequent responses, which suggest that teens are aware of the economic value of a college education, were as follows:

> Get a good job that pays a lot of money.
>
> More money, you can get a better job.
>
> [I'm going to college] to get a higher paying job.

One teen even suggested, "When you're not good enough to go to college, you go in the military." And still, one of his peers stated: "People are educated enough to know that you can't go into the military and then get a good job." The other dominant theme for going to college involves pressure from family, teachers, and peers, as seen in the following responses:

I have a career-minded family where it is expected.

Pressure, it is expected of us.

Pressure from my parents.

Several focus groups were polled to determine if the respondents felt pressured from parents, peers, and teachers. As it turned out, many of these teens felt overwhelmingly pressured to go to college. Strauss and Howe (2000, 149) received a similar response from a 16-year-old Millennial:

> Our parents expect us to go to college. It was never such a big deal before. The Boomers would leave high school and, if it didn't suit them to go and get a higher education, they would get a job for while, and when they had the means or intuition they would go back to school. This is an abnormality now. You would be considered a failure by your peers.

Interestingly, many teens claimed in focus groups they were going to college for more independence:

Get away from mom and dad.

Be able to depend and only rely on yourself.

> [I'm] going to get away from mom and dad, although I'm just far enough away where I came make my own decisions, yet close enough to call them if I need help.

[I'm going to college] to get away from mom and dad—more freedom.

One teen stated that the military would pay for college, but that the personal "cost" would be to high: "A lot of people look at it as, 'yeah the Navy will pay for my college, but four years of my life is being taken away,' and a lot of people look at it as 'I want my own life.'"

Many high schools today see their roles as preparing students for college. "Regardless of what courses students take," Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 115) observe, "high school counselors encourage them to attend college. In many ways, high schools build their reputations on how many of their students go to college." Vocational programs have been slashed to make room for advanced placement classes and other college prep classes. The very landscape and culture of American high schools has changed—as they now resemble the so-called "prep schools" of an early era.

B. WHY THE MILITARY?

Americans tend to perceive their ability to join the military in terms of rights. Shumate (1999, 12) feels that "the emphasis on rights over responsibilities has likely contributed to the current political and social climate in which American youth are unlikely to volunteer to join the military." She cites research showing that American youth have difficulty seeing the relevance of the armed forces and are turned off by the discipline, uniformity, and long hours of military life.

As seen in Table 2 (in Chapter II), about 5 percent of all students in focus groups planned to join the military after high school. Another 8 percent said they were "considering" military service after high school. In contrast, about 70 percent of American youth gave at least some or serious consideration to military service throughout the 1990s (Shumate 1999, 11). These polls, taken in the 1990s, required respondents to select from a predetermined list of options, which may account for the significant differences in the proportion of teens "considering" the military, since the question posed in the focus groups did not require students to select from a predetermined list. Monterey High School results were slightly different, as shown in Figure 2. As seen here, 6 percent

of students planned to join the military, and a somewhat smaller proportion than in the focus groups (86 percent) planned to attend college. Five percent of seniors at Monterey High School planned to enter the labor market, while 3 percent had other plans.

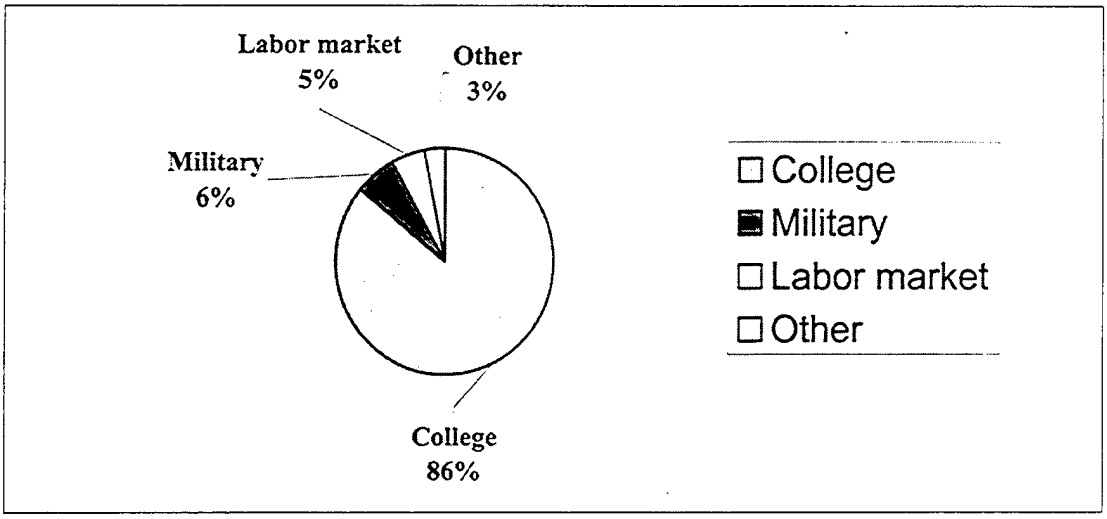

Figure 2. Monterey High School Survey: Plans of Students after High School

Teens in the focus groups who indicated that they would probably enter the military after high school gave the following reasons:

> My dad served 25 years and we have had a comfortable life-style. I'd like to bring the values and beliefs my Dad brought me from the Marines Corps to my kids one day.
>
> [The] benefits and it pays for school, it helps you get a better job when you get out.
>
> It gives me four years to think about what I want to do when I get out—what I want to do with my life.
>
> I want to get the signing bonus and it helps pay for college.
>
> [It] helps me get a better job—self-discipline, self-improvement, and mental stabilization.

> It differentiates you from the regular college graduate—if you also have military service.
>
> [It] makes me more marketable.

"People think of the military as a dorky thing to do," said one teen in a focus group, which is contrary to the thoughts of these teens.

Interestingly, all replies of "why" these teens chose the military are for self-centered reasons. Not one reply was for patriotic duty or service to the nation. As one study (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 16) finds, Millennials "are more interested in individual gains and benefits than they are in serving the 'greater good.'" Perhaps these authors are correct.

Herein lies the challenge to military recruiting. To meet military manpower needs, the US military must recruit a large portion of high school graduates yearly. The allure of adventurous, challenging, and sometimes arduous training are thought to only attract one-half million young Americans, all of whom are not qualified for military service. (Derbtshire 2001, 30) The remaining manpower needs must be recruited. Interestingly, forty-one percent of the study sample said that someone in their immediate family had served in the military. Youth who have a parent or sibling who has served in the military typically have a higher propensity to enlist than those who do not. In fact, one study found a strong relationship between family members in the military and a teen's propensity to enlist:

> When primary agents of influence such as family and friends are supportive of the military enlistment, the individual is more likely to enlist. Also youth with direct exposure to agents of influence with military experience are more likely to enlist. (Shumate 1999, 30)

If this relationship still holds true, the focus group results suggest that interest in joining the military must be particularly low among teens who have no family member with service experience, or that agents of influence have less influence in persuading teens to join the military.

C. SERVICE IDENTITIES

An exercise was conducted with the focus groups to determine teen's perceptions of each military service and what they might find attractive. Each teen was asked to assume the US government had enacted a military draft or compulsory service. All students were individually asked which service they would select and why. Only four teens refused to participate. The researcher cautioned each focus group about the "piling-on phenomenon" before starting this exercise. For example, teens were encouraged to express their own, independent views, not the views of the prior students. Interestingly, one report states: "The majority of young people would probably not participate voluntarily even in a war defined as necessary. Nevertheless, youth have not generally rejected war and sacrifice, but appear more cautious in supporting the use of military force and more selective in the price they are willing to pay" (Shumate 1999, 160).

Table 4 displays the results of the conscription exercise. Categories are roughly listed in order of magnitude. For example, Mission/Environment is the most common response given for selecting a particular branch of the military. Each branch of service is displayed along with corresponding categories for easy comparison. For example, the Personal, Credible Source category displays the percentages of students who would select a branch of the service based on a "personal, credible source." The percentages listed in Table 4 represent the proportion of students who said they would select that service

because of that particular category. Again, for example, 7 percent of teens who chose the Air Force selected it because of training and technology.

The responses in the focus group exercise reflect upon both attractive and unattractive features of each of the four services. Nevertheless, caution must be exercised in "reading too much into" these data. The reader must also bear in mind that each teen indicated "what" and "why" under the assumption of a military draft. Much can still be gleaned from an analysis of teens' responses.

It is interesting to note that some students in the focus groups could not differentiate between the military services. As one teen asked: "Does each service do something different? I thought they were pretty much the same." Thus, there is probably an underlying ignorance among participants in the focus groups as to what the military services actually do. (An explanation of the reasons or categories listed in Table 4 and 5 can be found in Appendix E.)

Table 5 displays the percentage of teens who identified a particular feature/category by service. For instance, of all students who said they would select a service based on a personal, credible source, 31 percent selected the Marine Corps, 27 percent selected the Navy, 25 percent selected the Air Force, and 18 percent selected the Army. The percentages are aggregated by category, rather than by service, as in Table 4. Additionally, as in Table 4, the categories in Table 5 are listed in order of magnitude.

The actual numbers of responses for each category are shown in Table 5. While the numbers may be low, it is important to note that each student had an unlimited number of options to give as to why he or she would join a particular service. Some

underlying reason influenced these teens to select a particular category. It is these reasons that allow us to understand the possible brand or identity teens may have of each of the four service.

Table 4. "Universal Conscription" Exercise: Percentage Distribution of Students Choosing a Service by Self-Stated Reason

Reason[1]	Percentage Choosing Service			
	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
Mission/Environment	36.7	31.8	5.8	11.4
Personal, Credible Source	20.0	17.2	25.0	13.0
Fly	2.2	4.6	1.7	44.0
Unknown	14.6	5.2	8.5	5.7
Challenge/Best	2.2	0.7	28.3	0.5
Travel	0.0	18.5	0.0	0.0
Navy Seals/Special Operations	2.2	10.6	0.8	0.5
Training/Technology	2.2	2.0	0.0	7.1
Self Improvement	0.0	0.0	14.2	0.0
Safest place	1.1	3.3	0.0	5.4
Other	3.3	1.4	3.3	2.1
Easier	2.2	1.3	0.8	3.8
Job Opportunities/College	5.6	2.0	0.8	0.5
Treat people	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.9
Advertising	0.0	0.0	5.0	0.0
Opportunity for action	1.1	0.0	3.3	0.0
Medical Service Corps	2.2	0.7	0.0	1.1
Uniform	1.1	0.7	2.5	0.0
Bonus	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Percent	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Number	**90**	**151**	**120**	**184**
Percent Choosing Service	**16.5**	**27.7**	**22.0**	**33.7**

Table 5. "Universal Conscription" Exercise: Percentage Distribution of Students Stating a Reason by Service of Choice

Reason[1]	Percentage Stating Reason				Total	
	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Percent	(Number)
Mission/Environment	30.3	44.0	6.4	19.3	100.0	109
Personal, Credible Source	18.4	26.5	30.6	24.5	100.0	98
Fly	2.2	7.6	2.2	88.0	100.0	92
Unknown	31.7	19.5	24.4	24.4	100.0	41
Challenge/Best	5.3	2.6	89.5	2.6	100.0	38
Travel	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	28
Navy Seals/SOF	10.0	80.0	5.0	5.0	100.0	20
Training/Technology	11.1	16.7	0.0	72.2	100.0	18
Self Improvement	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	17
Safest place	6.3	31.3	0.0	62.4	100.0	16
Other	33.0	14.0	32.0	21.0	100.0	13
Easier	16.7	16.7	8.3	58.3	100.0	12
Job Opportunities/College	50.0	30.0	10.0	10.0	100.0	10
Treat people	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	9
Advertising	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	6
Opportunity for action	20.0	0.0	80.0	0.0	100.0	5
Medical Service Corps	40.0	20.0	0.0	40.0	100.0	5
Uniform	20.0	20.0	60.0	0.0	100.0	5
Bonus	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	3
Total[2]						545

1 Categories derived from self-stated responses of participants. An explanation of the reasons can be found in Appendix E.

2 The number of total responses differs between Tables 1-3 and Table 5. These differences are attributed to teens who chose the Coast Guard, refused to participate, or responses that were not audible while reviewing focus group tapes.

The results of the survey at Monterey High School are almost identical to the responses of the focus groups, with the order of preference being the same and just minor differences in the percentages. Focus group results in Table 4 show that 34 percent of teens selected the Air Force, 28 percent selected the Navy, 22 percent selected the Marine Corps, and 16 percent selected the Army. As seen in Figure 3, 44 percent of seniors at Monterey High School selected the Air Force, 27 percent selected the Navy, 16 percent

selected the Marine Corps, and 13 percent opted for the Army. The consistently low ranking for the Army may signal increased recruiting challenges for this service in the future.

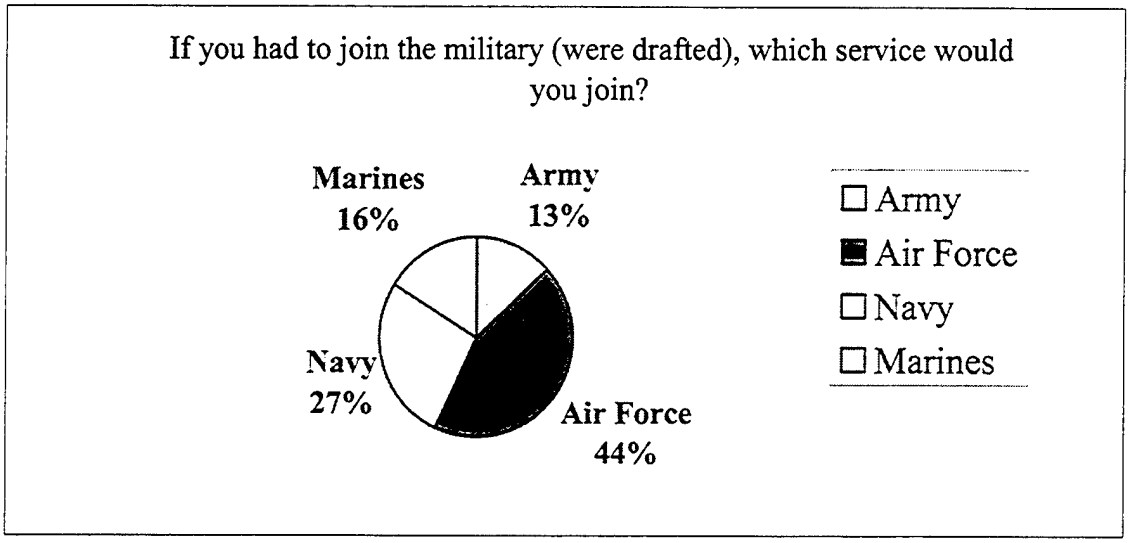

Figure 3. Monterey High School Survey: Service Choice in Universal Conscription Exercise

1. Air Force

As seen in Table 4 and Figure 3, the Air Force has the greatest overall appeal, with 34 percent of teens from the focus group exercise and 44 percent of seniors from the Monterey High School survey, respectively, indicating that they would select the Air Force, if drafted. As expected, the largest attraction to the Air Force is the opportunity to fly, with 44 percent of focus groups participants selecting the Air Force because they want to fly. As seen in Table 5, of those who gave "flying" as their reason for choosing a service, 88 percent selected the Air Force.

Also, as shown in Table 5, teens in focus groups perceived the Air Force as a safer, easier branch of the service that treats its people better. The Air Force received highest marks as the "safest place," with 62 percent of teens interested in safety choosing

to join the Air Force. The Air force is also perceived as an "easier service" among teens who identified this reason, with 58 percent choosing the Air Force. Teens selecting a service based on the perception of being treated better are unanimous in their belief that the Air Force does it best: as seen in Table 5. The Air Force is also perceived by teens to provide training that is more technical. Of those who would a service because of technical training, the Air Force received the highest proportion at 72 percent.

Teens are also attracted to the Mission/Environment of Service of the Air Force, with 19 percent choosing the Air Force. Teens normally stated something along the lines of "I'm interested in aviation" or "I like being around planes." This category is a bit broad and hard to compare with other services in the same category.

Students were asked to "describe your mental picture of a typical airmen." They responded with words such as: flight gear, helmet, cockpit, daring, exciting, laid-back, *Top Gun* [a film about Navy pilots!], Tom Cruise, or "somebody really smart." The Air Force apparently has a wide appeal with youth today. It still remains the service of choice with American youth and has a particularly strong draw with females. Teens tend to believe everyone in the Air Force flies a plane and that it is not as demanding as the other services.

2. Army

The Army appeared most familiar to teens in focus group discussions, but it was also the least attractive to youth with only 16.5 percent opting for the Army in the focus group exercise and an even smaller amount, 13 percent, in the Monterey High School survey (as seen in Table 4 and Figure 3, respectively). Interestingly, even though the Army is the largest service, it had the lowest percentage of teens selecting it because of a

personal, credible source (18.4 percent). One could reasonably assume the Army has the most veterans in society simply by virtue of being the largest branch of the military.

One explanation could be that ex-soldiers did not have a positive experience and communicated this to the younger generation. Consider what Colonel David Hackworth (1999), the most decorated living American solider, stated in a recent article: "Relatives and friends who because of a recent bad military trip or broken promises, such as reduced medical, hospital and other retirement benefits, are telling young people, don't join up. You'll just get used and abused like I did." Shumate (1999) comments on the subject in her dissertation: "Up until 1995, military experience among agents of influence appears to be positive prior to 1994. However, as of 1996, military experience among agents of influence appears to be have a negative impact on an individual's propensity to enlist—possibly due to decreasing military benefits and the Clinton administration." The year 1996 appears to be pivotal in shifting attitudes from departing veterans.

The only categories that appear noteworthy in determining the Army's identity with teens are "Job Opportunities/College," "Bonus," and "Mission/Environment of Service." The Army had the strongest association with bonuses, as it was the only service selected because of bonuses. Three students indicated they would select the Army because of bonuses, and these teens all came from different focus groups in different geographical locations. (Incidentally, bonuses would probably not be offered in a draft.) Teens in focus groups also tended to perceive the Army as having the most job opportunities and as the service that is most likely to pay for college. Half of all teens who selected a service for "job opportunities or money for college" selected the Army.

The Army has a particularly strong draw due to "Mission/Environment of Service." However, many teens opted for the Army because they were, "afraid of flying" or "got seasick," or words to that effect. Many times the Army was the service of choice because a teen had ruled out the other branches. The Army is the most difficult service to brand or trend. No strong attraction could be detected for why teens picked the Army. Most teens are very familiar with what the Army is, and what is does; however, the Army does not appear to have wide appeal with youth.

When students were asked, "Describe your mental picture of a typical solider" they responded with words such as: dirty, strong, distinguished, "ground pounding with camouflage gear," "pictures of Vietnam," "boot camp, someone yelling at you," "guys wearing camouflage running around trees," "has a helmet on, is camouflaged and running through the jungle," and "muddy and dirty." One teen stated that the "the Army is too ordinary"—which seems to symbolize how youth tend to perceive the Army, at least in the focus groups of this study.

3. Navy

The Navy appears to have substantial appeal with young people, with 28 percent from the focus group exercise and 27 percent from the Monterey High School survey opting to select the Navy, if drafted. (See Table 4 and Figure 3.) A "Personal Credible (Navy) Source" had strong attraction with youth: 17 percent of those who selected the Navy did so because of a personal, credible source; and over a quarter (26.5 percent) of the teens who selected a service based on a personal, credible source, selected the Navy over another service, as depicted in Table 5.

The Navy has the second highest percentage of any category after flying with respect to "Mission/Environment of Service." Most teens in this category stated, "I'd join the Navy because I like the ocean." The association of the Navy with the ocean apparently has wide appeal with teenagers, especially with young women in focus groups. Of all who responded that they would select the Navy if drafted, 31.8 percent indicated they would join the Navy because of the ocean and ships.

The other strong appeal of the Navy is travel. Every teen who would select a service for travel opportunities selected the Navy. Slightly more than 18 percent of those who selected the Navy did so because of its perceived opportunities for travel.

As with the Air Force, the Navy is seen as a relatively "safe place." The Navy was chosen by 31.3 percent of all teens who were concerned mainly with safety. Several students who responded that they would select the Navy because of safety concerns were asked if the *USS Cole* bombing had any impact on their decision. Several of the respondents stated that "it was an isolated event," or words to that effect.

The Navy's SEAL program is also very attractive to young people, with 80 percent of youth who would select a service based on special operations choosing the Navy. Over 10 percent of all teens who selected the Navy did so because of the chance to become a SEAL.

In summary, the Navy has wide appeal with youth because it is regarded as a relatively safe service, it has SEALS, it has an appealing environment of service (the sea), and it provides an opportunity to travel. When students were asked to "describe your mental picture of a typical Sailor" they responded with words such as: dressed in

white, sitting—using technology, open ocean, white uniform, guys on a boat, brave, "swabbing the deck and doing little dances," and "old dirty, sweaty, moldy."

4. Marine Corps

The Marine Corps appears to have a unique appeal among teens, with 22 percent from the focus group exercise and 16 percent from the Monterey High School survey (as displayed in Table 4 and Figure 3, respectively) opting for the Marines, if drafted. The Marine Corps has the strongest association with a personal, credible source. This is especially significant when one considers that the Marine Corps is the smallest of the four branches, with the smallest number of "alumni." Of all teens who stated they would become a member of the military because of a personal, credible source, 30.6 percent selected the Marine Corps over other services. Moreover, one quarter (25 percent) of all those who selected the Marines did so because of a personal, credible source. This finding is supported by other research, which shows that "having had a friend or family member with a favorable military experience" has one of the strongest and most positive correlations with military enlistment (Moskos 2000).

The greatest appeal of the Marine Corps, and one that makes the service unique, is "Self Improvement" and "Challenge/Best." Of all teens who selected the Marine Corps, 14.2 percent did so for self-improvement reasons. Further, the Marine Corps appears to have a virtual monopoly on this feature, as all who selected the military for self–improvement reasons opted for the Marines. However, the widest appeal for the Marine Corps lies in the idea of being the best or toughest. Of those who said they would select the Marines, 28.3 percent would do so because the Marines are perceived as offering the

greatest challenge or the best opportunity to be part of a team. Almost all teens who selected the military looking for a challenge selected the Marines—89.5 percent.

It is interesting to note that "Advertising" was only associated with the Marines Corps. For instance, six teens said they would select the Marines because of some form of advertising they saw—usually a TV commercial. While this is a small number, it is noteworthy when one considers that the Marine Corps spends less than any other service on its advertising and was the only service associated with advertising.

Teens looking for action tend to select the Marines. Teens who selected the military because of the opportunity for action chose the Marine Corps by a margin of 80 percent. The last attribute that the Marine Corps had stronger identification with was "uniforms." Sixty percent of teens who would select a branch of the military because of its "uniforms" selected the Marine Corps.

When students were asked to "describe their mental picture of a typical Marine," they responded with words such as: DI hat, sword, brave, patriotic, honorable, someone with a gun, very disciplined; "I think of the sword", clean, strict, orderly, perfect, and "the dude with the sword fighting the dragon."

The Marines Corps appears to have a near monopoly on intangible aspects of service. It appears to have both a unique and wide appeal with youth that is particularly strong among those who have known a Marine and among male teenagers. Female teens in the focus groups were generally not attracted to the Marines Corps.

Millennials easily and readily identify with brands—with Nike being the number-one brand with teens in the late 1990s (Cullen, 1997). Perhaps this is why the Marine

Corps appears to be more successful in recruiting from this generation of youth—they have an effective, identifiable brand.

The purpose of this part of the research is not to extract statistical information, per se. More importantly, it attempts to brand or identify the characteristics that today's youth might find attractive with each service. These findings are limited because of the small sample size and because the data may not be representative across the nation. They do, however, provide an indication of how teens today may view service in the US military.

D. MILITARY AS A CAREER OPTION

So, why don't more youth consider the military as a career option? To answer this question in the present context, we have to understand the Millennials' environment and forces of influence (discussed in Chapters III and IV) as well as what they perceive as the unattractive and attractive features of military service. The real challenge is bridging the gap between teen perceptions and the reality of military service.

The attraction of military service has waned considerably over the past ten or more years. Indeed, since 1990, youth propensity to enlist in the US military has been steadily declining, and there does not appear to be a simple explanation for this phenomenon (Shumate 1999, 1). In fact, a 1990 study by the Department of Defense revealed 24.6 percent of youth were probably or definitely interested in joining the military; by 1997, this proportion had dropped to 10.2 percent. (Shumate 1999, 44, 180) As Shumate (1999, 181) writes, "Many scholars cite recent survey data indicating, shifts in attitudes and values have distanced the nation's young people from the armed forces." Moreover, "Youth attitudes toward the military and young people's propensity to select

are complex, multidimensional phenomena likely involving intricate decision making processes based on individual desires and circumstances as well as recruiting requirements of the United States military" (Shumate 1999, 37).

Chambers (2000, 11) observes that "today's youth see a military with an uncertain future, ill-defined mission, long family separations, unequal living conditions, and a general lack of choice [control] compared to a civilian career showing long term growth and promise, with greater rewards in familial and personal fulfillment." As one source even suggests, "as a result of the Clinton administration, the core values of American society may be antithetical to military service" (Shumate 1999, 13). Mayfield (2000, 5) explains the challenge as follows: "Kids today are more interested in money than anything else. Making a lot of money, having a lot of money, having all things. They don't see that happening in the military."

Shumate (1999, 188) observes that "a slight decline in youth giving serious consideration to military service and percentages of youth giving some consideration to the military has consistently remained around fifty percent." "Serious consideration" and "some consideration" are categories from which to select on the Youth Attitude Tracking Study. Apparently, there has not been a significant increase in the number of youth never considering military service, suggesting that the status of the military has not declined among young Americans. Of all the literature reviewed for this study, Shumate's dissertation (1999, 67) seems to best articulate the decline in propensity to enlist:

> One may wonder where American youth attain their views of military service especially in light of the reduced visibility of the military in the past twenty years. Since the draft ended in 1973, fewer family members have served in the military, resulting in generally less familiarization with

the military and the demands of military life. Further, with the end of the Cold War, the military reduced the total number of individuals required on active duty. Also, as a result of the BRAC recommendations, the number of military bases in major metropolitan areas has been significantly reduced. Finally, today's high school seniors were in grade school during Desert Storm, the most recent large-scale military engagement involving the US military since the Vietnam War, resulting in a generation that has not been personally affected by the issues of war and military service. All of the circumstances taken together have resulted in a less visible, more isolated military.

Figure 4 displays the results from the Monterey High School survey as to how many teenagers have considered the military as a job option, from strongly considered to not at all. Only 3 percent "strongly considered" the military as a job option and 30 percent "considered" the military as a job option. These findings seem consistent with Shumate's research. Eight percent of teens in the survey had no opinion. Further, 16 percent indicated that they had "not considered" the military as a job option and another 43 percent "would not consider" the military.

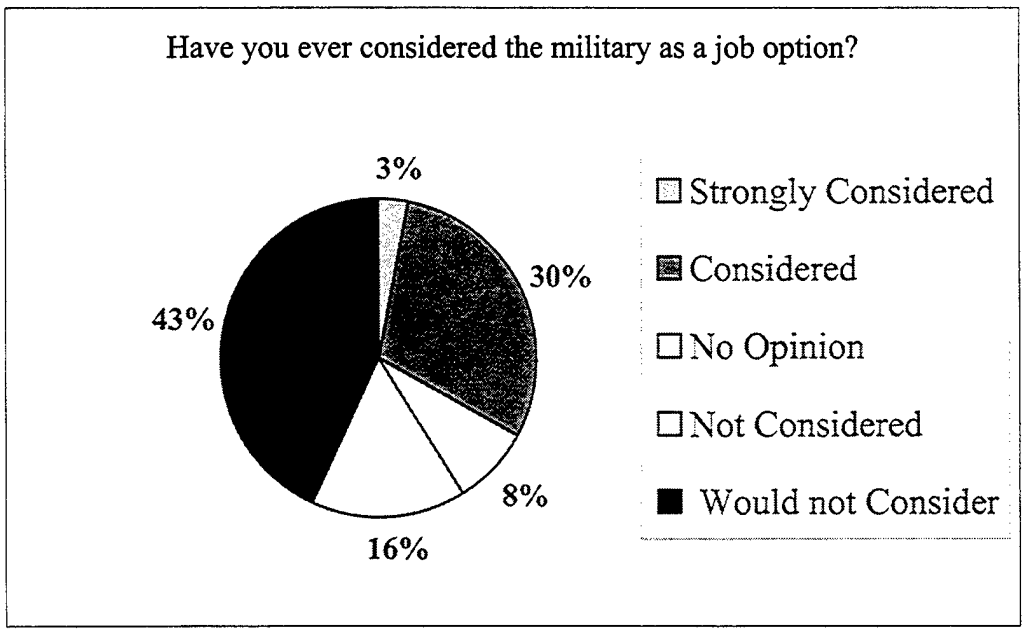

Figure 4. Monterey High School Survey: Percent of Teens Considering the Military, by Level of Consideration

1. The Military as an Unattractive Career Option

Every focus group in the present study was asked, "What about the military makes it an unattractive career option?" Or, put another way, I wouldn't join the military because of_____?" Teens today find the military unattractive for a variety of reasons—namely, lack of information, loss of autonomy, fear, long obligation, military lifestyle, family separation, and because it is just plain irrelevant. Interestingly, Birnbaum et al. (2000, 15), find almost the identical reasons among many of today's youth for not wanting to join the military: military lifestyle, length of commitment, other career interest, family obligations, and the hazards associated with service and that many youth are "disinclined towards the military because of the perceived lack of importance placed by the military on these variable expectations." According to Shumate (1999, 78), the most often cited reasons for not joining the military are: dislike of military life, other career interest, family obligations, and long commitments. These factors were echoed in every focus group. Obviously, the "significance placed on these attributes by American youth may explain, in part, the decline in military service."

Figure 5 graphically depicts the features that make the military an unattractive career option for seniors at Monterey High School. Students were given a list of choices including "doesn't match career objectives" (25 percent), "college bound" (23 percent), "personal beliefs" (18 percent), "personal freedom/control" (11 percent), "risk of life/limb" (6 percent), "lack of information" (3 percent), "parental pressure not to join" (3 percent), "lack of exposure" (3 percent), or "other reason" (3 percent). These findings tend to be consistent with the focus group findings, with the exception of personal beliefs.

During focus group discussions, teens rarely mentioned the military as an unattractive career option because of personal beliefs. Moreover, the reader must keep in mind that focus group responses were not selected from a structured list as was the survey administered at Monterey High School.

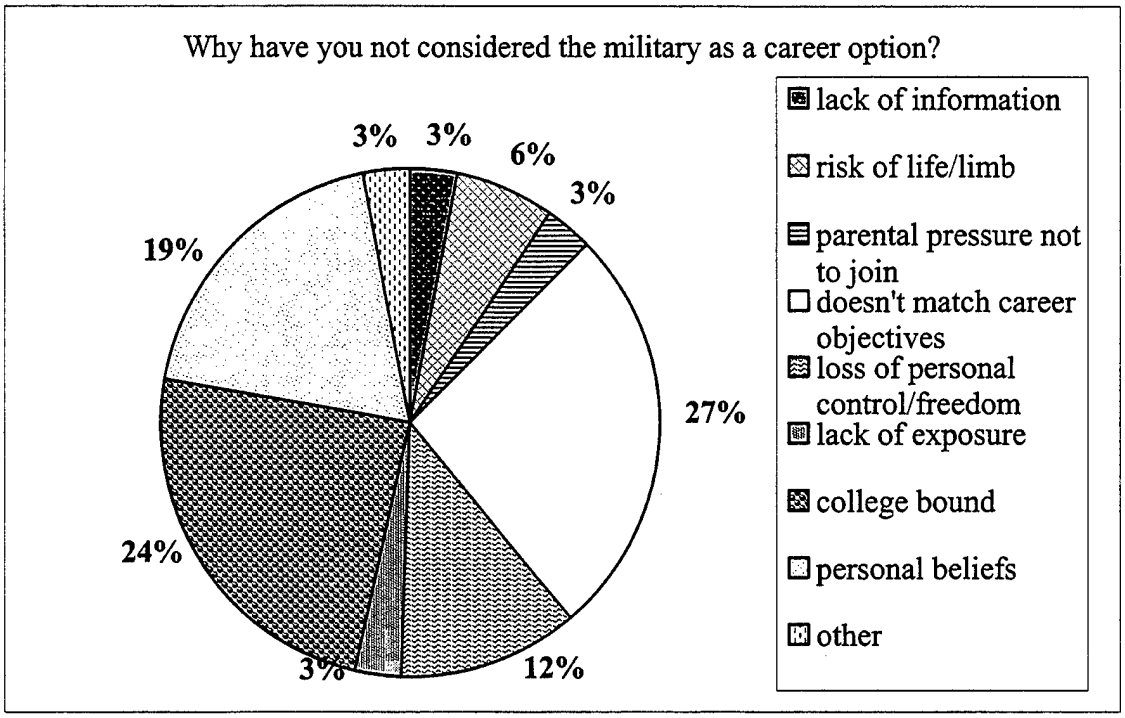

Figure 5. Monterey High School Survey: Reasons Why the Military is an Unattractive Career Option

a. Lack of Information

Youth today do not know much about the military. An appropriate title for this thesis might be: "Millennials are from Earth; the Military is from Mars." Youth today view the military in almost the same way as they might view a Martian—with interest but as a foreign being to them. Many cannot name even one person they know currently in the military.

Simply put, military service is not on most teens' radarscopes. A former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Jay Johnson, describes it as follows: "In the 1960's military service was viewed by most folks as 'normal and fine.' Now military service is not a natural part of this generation's calculus." (Mayfield, 2000) Additionally, Shumate (1999,193) credits lack of information with teens' lower propensities to enlist: "The lack of interaction between members of the military and the general public may lead to further recruitment problems as young people have few knowledgeable sources of information about military service."

Many teenagers' perceptions of the military today are so skewed that they are difficult to describe. In one particular focus group, an entire class was unable to name the four branches of the armed forces. Seeming majorities of teens today have not even given the idea of military service the remotest consideration—again, not because they are necessarily against it, but rather because they have little or no exposure to anything military. Many teens in focus groups are uninformed or ill-informed on the very basic elements of military service. The causes for this information gap are many. One editorial from a Monterey, California newspaper referred to the issue in generational terms:

> One problem for recruiting is the growing gap between society and the military: Years ago teenagers were nudged toward the military by fathers and uncles who served in World War II, but now that generation is dying off and with them goes much of the inspiration. (Monterey County *Herald*, 2000)

Teens in focus groups describe the problem in much the same way:

I know so little; I really don't have an opinion.

I just don't know anything.

I just don't know anything about it.

I don't know—I just never have considered it. I've never really had any exposure to it.

People build it up to be really bad, but no one takes the time to really find out.

I don't know, I've always heard bad stuff.

If I had more information on what they have to offer, I don't know, I don't know anything about it.

Teens apparently have a tendency to view military service as entering an abyss—the military for them is unknown, unexplained territory, where few have gone before. As Johnson (1999), a doctoral student, writes: "Gen Y wants more information and facts before making long-term employment within a given industry." Given that today's youth are a product of the information revolution, it stands to reason the military is an unattractive career option of the unknown.

Whether the information is available or not is irrelevant: teens tend to believe the information is either unavailable or inaccurate. Consider what some Millennials recommended in the focus groups when asked, "What would entice your generation to join the military?" Many teens stated "more information":

Educate people on the military, what it is, what is does.

A lot of people just don't know anything about it.

More information, it is hard to get information.

More information on what it is all about.

> They need to explain better what you're actually getting into. Whereas college, you know exactly what your doing.
>
> Inform you more about what you do when you are in it, not just the benefits...no one really knows.

Most teens in the focus groups were very reluctant to talk with a recruiter. Focus group discussions suggest that military recruiters are not viewed positively by today's teens. The "hard sell" and persistence, for which recruiters are infamous, are unattractive qualities to many teens. As one teen said: "It makes them [recruiters] look desperate." Other teens stated: "The recruiter is constantly calling and following me—it is a real turn off." And another: "It is too much of an in-your-face approach to recruiting." Still another believes: "Recruiters lie to you." Any argument that information on the military is available by talking to a recruiter is not likely to resonate with youth. Considering the perceived lack of information by youth and their reluctance to talk with recruiters, a strong case can be made for an online, Web-based site for recruiting.

b. Loss of Autonomy

The salient, *dominant* theme of what teens find unattractive about the military is the "loss of control" associated with military service. As Shumate (1999, 20) observes, "The fundamental concepts of discipline and service before self, required for military efficiency and unit cohesiveness, are among the most difficult principles for a liberal democracy to instill in new recruits and have likely contributed to less youth willing to join the military." Focus groups conducted by BBDO Advertising discovered that "they [teens] attribute a loss identity and independence to military service" (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 16). Additionally, Leo Burnett, USA (the Army's former

advertising agency) determined that young people aged 14 to 24 see the military culture as a *threat to their own identity* and "military training—hollering drill instructors, push ups in the mud, jumping out of planes—as scary." (Derbyshire 2001, 30) The same findings emerged from the present study.

Millennials are loud and clear on the issue of losing control by joining the military. Consider some of the many comments from the focus groups as to what makes the military an unattractive career option:

> Too much discipline and control.
>
> Three or four years of being told what to do is not appealing.
>
> In the military, you can't express your opinion. You have to do what your told.
>
> You don't have enough freedom.
>
> You lose your power to make decisions for yourself.
>
> I might get sent to a war that I didn't feel was worth fighting for, I wouldn't be very appreciative of that and I couldn't back out—especially risking my life for something I didn't believe in.
>
> You don't have a choice about anything.
>
> You have lots of rules and you have to follow them or, you go to the brig.
>
> Someone is always telling you what to do.
>
> The restrictions placed on you the loss of personal freedom [make the military unattractive].
>
> Being ordered around [makes the military unattractive].
>
> You have too many restrictions placed on you—loss of personal freedom.

You can't express yourself.

[Me] being controlled all the time, being told what to do [makes the military unattractive].

You're giving your best years, the years when your twenty to the military and that is not something I want to do. Yea you're serving your country, but your having something control your life, somebody has got complete and utter control over you.

People are afraid to go into the military because they are afraid they won't be able to do what they want to do.

I'm open minded and opinionated and would have a hard time controlling my temper and not say anything.

You don't have enough freedom. You lose your power to make decisions for yourself.

I wouldn't join the military because you give them too much control, and too much say over what I do.

Your made to respect people you may not want to.

I just don't want to be owned by the government.

The control they have over you. I like the idea of fighting for my country, but I don't like the control issue.

A lot of people look at it as 'yea the Navy will pay for my college, but four years of my life is being taken away and a lot of people look at as I want my own life.'

One insightful youth in a focus group had this to say: "This generation is used to independence and freedom more than the past, people have more money, and they can do what they want. The military reduces your independence, you have to follow orders; people *tell* you what to do!" In addition, some of his contemporaries reinforced this view of a loss of identity:

> It saps all individuality out of you while, at the same time anybody who wanted to be a pacifist and not participate would be forced to.
>
> The conformity." [What do you mean?] "Well, y'all look the same, talk the same, dress the same, and do the same things. It's a loss of identity.
>
> They form you the way they want you to be; strip you of your identity and brainwash you.

Several teens in the focus groups felt that the military was even more strict than their already demanding mom and dad: "It's like going to a place that's even more strict than my house. People go to college to get away from their parents—to get all the freedom. But going in the military is like double the discipline of your parents. It's the opposite of the freedom you would enjoy in college." Another teen in a focus group described joining the military as an issue of comfort: "It's a lack of being comfortable, and that's really what life is all about. You avoid things that are not comfortable. My friend in the Air Force had to do a bunch of push-ups and run a lot. It's a whole big comfort thing. I'd be uncomfortable."

Typically, the number-one-cited reason for not wanting to join the military is dislike for military life (17.8 percent)—normally defined as a loss of control (Shumate 1999, 121). One expert even suggests "the pendulum of values in American society has been swinging toward an emphasis on individualism for several decades" (Shumate 1999, 102). An online survey examining the Millennial work ethic found that money ranked seventh behind flexibility, training, less rush hour commuting, and other benefits seen as more important than cash. Bruce Tulgan, founder of a company that researches the working lives of the emerging Millennials, finds that the top non-monetary rewards include "control over work schedule, training opportunities, exposure to decision makers,

credit for projects, and increased responsibilities—many which are antithetical to the military." (Morgan 2000)

This theme is consistent in recent studies: loss of autonomy or independence is the primary reason why the military is an unattractive career option for many of today's youth. Shumate's research, for example, demonstrates a strong inverse relationship between the level of importance placed on personal freedom and one's likelihood of joining the military. (Shumate 1999, 128)

As early as 1997, Brown (1997) wrote about this coming trend in the Millennial generation and the issue of control: "Venom toward anything authoritarian—parents, siblings, homework, bullies, dress codes—appear to be even of greater concern to Gen Y than the normal teen experience." Even more recently, the Army launched a new marketing strategy called "An Army of One," based on the notion that teens do not want to give up control. John Leo, (*U.S. News & World Report*, January 22, 2001), explains it as follows:

> The Army churned up a lot of research on young adults by the Rand Corp., Yankelovich Partners Inc., and McKinsey & Co. On the basis of the findings, many of them already well known, the Army apparently concluded that the current generation of young people is so individualistic, so resistant to authority and rules, that it has to market military life as the natural home of the freewheeling, unfettered spirit.

Only time will tell if this strategy will work. What is important to note is the emphasis on the issue of autonomy. The Army has scrapped its "Be All You Can Be" slogan for "An Army of One," based on the perceived need to address the control issue with the recruiting target market.

Teens have historically put a high value on their autonomy. However, that value appears much higher today than perhaps ever before. Why? Why do teens today appear to value autonomy more than past generations? Part of the explanation may be the omnipresence of the computer in their lives, their domineering parents, and the pressure placed upon them to be independent and responsible at an earlier age. The following discussion explains why control is so critical to teens.

(1) The Empowering Computer. Youth are the catalyst of the information revolution. They are the innovators, the entrepreneurs of the information age. Millennials have grown up with the computer, and it has empowered them. As Tapscott (1999, 68,8) writes:

> Typical N-geners have a strong sense of independence and autonomy. This trait is derived largely from the active role they play as information seekers rather than the passive role of information recipients. N-geners unprecedented access to information also gives them the power to acquire the knowledge necessary to confront information they feel may not be correct.
>
> Many experts have remarked that children love computers because they have absolute control over the machine. Internet connections give kids control not just of their computers, but of their social communication, and their attempts to master situations they will have to face as adults.

The ubiquitous computer has also changed the way youth view authority. They are not as willing to listen and obey simply because someone is older and perhaps wiser. The axiom that wisdom comes with age may not be as applicable to this generation as it was in the past. Again, Tapscott (1999, 26, 56) clearly articulates this point several times in his book, *Growing Up Digital: the Rise of the Net Generation*:

> Children begin to question assumptions previously unchallenged. On the net there is great diversity of opinion regarding all things and constant opportunities to present your views. This is leading to a generation, which increasingly questions the implicit values contained in information. Information becomes knowledge through the application of human judgment.
>
> The Net is forcing youth today to exercise not only critical thinking but also their own judgment. This process is *contributing to the relentless breakdown of the notion of authority and the experience driven hierarchies.* Increasingly, young people are the masters of the interactive environment and of their own fate.
>
> The Net seems to provide a vehicle to explore the self and for children to establish themselves as independent, self-governing individuals.

Certainly, this "breakdown of the notion of authority and the experience driven hierarchies" is the antithesis of military service and partially explains Millennials' fixation on autonomy.

(2) Controlling Parents. The computer isn't the only culprit fueling youth's fixation on autonomy. Chapter IV examined today's parents, Boomers, who tend to be very strict and may even be considered "control freaks." As one youth expert states with respect to Boomer parents: "Come on. It's one thing to worry and hope for the best, but it's an entirely different thing to control every aspect of the poor kid's friggen life" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 150). Strauss and Howe, in their book, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation,* argue that the degradation of society is pushing parents to be over-controlling with their kids:

> Parents must cope with weak or discredited public institutions that, they fear, could undermine their best efforts. This tension has produced a parental fixation on ***control***, and a cooler style of nurture, that are together shaping a very different—and in many ways, opposite—kind of generation (Strauss and Howe 1999, 141).

Strauss and Howe (2000, 150) quote a Boomer parent, obviously aware of the domineering, almost oppressive parenting style. This parent states:

> I understand how it happened; the moralistic tendencies of my generation combined with the '80's anxiety about deteriorating and unsafe child's world has led us to impose a regimen on our children that we would never have tolerated ourselves, creating a mind-set utterly foreign to our own.

The threats available to children today have encouraged parents to become more controlling. Crimes, drugs, sexual predators, seen each night on the news, have all acted in concert to reinforce paranoia in parents today. Some parents have even resorted to spying on their kids, and many companies today are serving this growing industry. As MSNBC reports:

> A growing number of parents are at wit's end are turning to spying or drug detection equipment, not just telephone taps but swabs that you can wipe across clothing or an automobile dashboard and get an instant reading if there are traces of drugs. Some are even hiring drug-sniffing dogs or mounting little hidden cameras so they can secretly tape a child's room for days. (Strauss and Howe 2000, 139)

Andrea Peterson of the *Wall Street Journal* reports in her article, "It's Not Big Brother Invading Kids' Privacy. It's Mom and Dad" (November 6, 2000): "In the age-old battle between independence-seeking teenagers and worried parents, the older generation is packing new weapons." The article examines a host of tools available to today's parents—all in an effort to further control their children.

Some of the tools available to parents today include "caller ID" that tells parents who is calling, cell phone bills that detail every call made, computer programs that track every Web site visited and every e-mail sent, and new technologies

that now allow parents to download live Webcasts via cell phone to monitor home while away.

One company, Pocketcard, Inc., offers a service that notifies parents via instant e-mail of credit card purchases. Another, EZ-pass, offers an electronic toll-taker that tells the exact time and place a teen crossed a given toll. Xanboo, Inc. plans on launching a complete home-surveillance system including cameras and motion sensors that alert parents when and what their kids may be up to. Lastly, PacketVideo Corp, out of San Diego, will soon offer streaming video to parents' cell phones while other companies are launching technologies that will turn cell phones into homing devices. Strauss and Howe often refer to the Millennial generation as the most watched-over generation ever. It is certainly easy to see how they have come to that conclusion.

One Millennial, quoted in *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation,* sees it this way: "All of our lives, our parents have protected us, sheltered us. Now we must break free of those chains and wander the world" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 155). At the same time, another author describes it as follows: "Inevitably, kids rail on their parents for being too suspicious or controlling" (O'Reilly 2000, 145). The age-old battle over independent-seeking teens and parents continues with new tools and increased emphasis.

(3) Early Responsibilities. Dual-income parents are a phenomenon of the Millennial generation. Strauss and Howe (2000, 266) describe it as "Boomer parents, double incomes, highly cherished children and the busy schedules that come with two jobs." Because of both parents working, youth today are thrust with

responsibilities at an earlier age. "Millennials spend substantially more time than Gen Xers did on tasks previously performed by a parent, from food shopping to cooking to laundry to caring for a sibling" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 276). Since so many Millennials do the work of a surrogate parent, they tend to feel like an adult at an earlier age and, hence, value the autonomy adults have. Zoba (1999, 30, 32, 37) describes the impact of both parents working as:

> In your generation [Boomers], the sin nature embodied itself in "self" and the desire to satisfy yourself. And because you guys are our parents, your generation's emphasis on self has made it so both parents are at work to make the most money possible. So we're being raised without parents in the home and we don't have that guidance. We are raised by day cares and television and everything else.
>
> Their revolution left many single-parent homes in its wake and accelerated consumerism, creating an environment where both parents work to maintain a certain standard of living.

Not only are adult responsibilities encouraging Millennials to place a greater value on autonomy, but also to place a greater value on control. Interestingly, because of both parents working and smaller families, Millennials probably spend more time alone than any generation. Stevenson and Schneider report that,

> Teens also spend a significant time alone, approximately 20 percent of their waking hours. They spend another 9 percent with their friends outside of school. In fact, the average American teenager spends 3 ½ hours alone each day. They spend more time alone on average, than with family or friends. (Stevenson and Schneider 1999, 191)

Time alone builds independence and self-reliance—both traits that emphasize autonomy.

The Millennial teen may value autonomy more than his or her predecessors because of the influences of technology, the over-controlling tendencies of Boomer parents, and the responsibilities thrust upon them at an earlier age. Teen perceptions of the military are at odds with their collective value placed on autonomy. Unfortunately, a lack of accurate information on the military will only perpetuate the popular caricature of an institution that is devoted to controlling its members.

c. Fear

Many Millennial teens may be afraid of military service, based on the responses of focus groups. Teens today are afraid of what they think they know, and even more afraid of what they *don't know.* This fear of the unknown is reinforced by misconceptions of the military and come in three forms: fear of death, fear of boot camp, and fear of the physical rigors of military service.

(1) Fear of Death. Inevitably, death and injury are risks associated with military service. However, teens today are more risk-averse and tend to have unrealistic views of the risk of death while serving in the military. These unrealistic views are partly a product of the entertainment industry and movies such as *Saving Private Ryan, Full Metal Jacket,* and *Platoon.*

During several focus group sessions, teens said the military is an unattractive career option because of the possibility of being killed. Their comments included the following:

> [I'm] scared of dying in combat.
>
> You could die.
>
> [The possibility of] death.

[I fear] fighting a war and dying.

Its not only death [I fear] but the emotional causalities and the loss of limbs, the blinding.

Death comes to mind.

[I fear] death and killing others.

The thought of going to war and being hurt or killed [make the military an unattractive career option].

The prospect of going to war and getting killed [make the military an unattractive career option].

[I could be] sent to war and die.

[The] risk of life in a major conflict [make the military an unattractive career option].

A war could spring up and I'd have to put my life on the line.

One student even suggested, "They [the military] have to put up big bonuses to attract people because so many die."

This theme, death or injury, was expressed in *every* focus group. The concern with being killed or injured was not unexpected; however, the degree or perception of risk associated with military service was surprising.

On several occasions, teens were polled by the researcher to determine their perceptions of the degree of risk associated with the military. For instance, teens were asked in several focus groups: "What percentage of those who wore a uniform in World War II or Vietnam were actually killed in combat?" Perhaps, this question is a bit unfair. In fact, most active-duty personnel in the military could probably not provide an accurate estimate; however, it is likely that active-duty personnel would be

much more realistic in their responses. Teens in the focus groups tended to believe that between 20 and 40 percent of persons in uniform during a war were ultimately killed in combat. One teen even suggested that the percentage was a high as 80 percent! Very few teens expressed any estimate lower than 10 percent. For point of reference, Table 6 displays the causalities, and number and proportion of American military personnel killed in combat since World War I. As seen here, the highest percentage of American service members killed in action was during World War II, at 2.5 percent.

Incredibly, the death rate for personnel deployed to Desert Storm was 69 per 100,000. Actuaries at the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company calculated that the death rate for males living in the United States during the same period was 104 per 100,000; thus, it was statistically safer for young men in a military war zone than for those in a civilian setting. (Harper's Index, Harper's, May 1991)

Table 6. Number and Percentage of Service Members Killed in Action, by Conflict, World War I to the Gulf War

Conflict	Total Served[a]	Killed in Action	Percentage Killed
World War I	4,734,991	116,516	2.5
World War II	16,112,560	405,399	2.5
KOREA	5,720,000	36,189	0.6
VIETNAM	8,744,000	58,151	0.7
GULF WAR	1,952,605	372	0.0[b]
Total	37,264,156	616,267	1.7

a. Total number of active-duty personnel who served during the entire period of conflict.

b. Less than .005 percent.

Source: Gulf War statistics are from Gulf War Chronology: Statistics (www.sci.fi/~fta/stats.html). Other statistics are from DoD US Casualties: Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 1988 (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense Directorate for Information, Operations and Reports, 1989).

Several observers describe Millennials as the most sheltered and protected generation in history. For example, Strauss and Howe (2000, 86) write: "Millennials share the common bond with one another as being more wanted, protected, and cared for than their older generational siblings." Their Boomer parents have carefully watched over them as they grew up, so much so that they now are a generation of teens that is extremely risk-averse, as Strauss and Howe (2000, 291) observe:

> Youngsters are cosseted from any risk of accident and schools are fearful of instigating trips beyond their own gates...[T]he adventurer David Hempleman-Adams said: "We are becoming a society of softies. It is a crazy reflection of our times that we are surrounding our children in cotton wool...they will not be able to cope with risk when they encounter it as adults.

Master Gunnery Sergeant Macmillan, Chief Instructor at the Marine Corps Recruiting School, with over twenty years of experience in recruiting, believes that "because the Millennials are so protected and sheltered, they view the military as too 'risky.'" Macmillan even suggests that the rise of the "X Games" is a testimonial of this generations' aversion to risk, and that they may be thrill-seeking vicariously through X-game athletes. The Millennials, according to Macmillan, may believe the military does not have their well-being in mind. (Macmillan 2000)

(2) Fear of Boot Camp. For whatever reason, the strongest image of the military in the minds of many teens involves boot camp. They are engrossed with boot camp and do not think beyond introductory training; in fact, they seem to think that boot camp generally represents military life. For many teens, the military is boot camp extended through four years. Fear of having to go to boot camp

was a consistent reason given in the focus groups as to why the military is an unattractive career option.

Every focus group in every geographical location echoed the same theme, fear of boot camp. When asked, "what about military service makes it an unattractive option?," teens responded as follows:

> Fear of boot camp [make the military an unattractive career option].
>
> Basic training [make the military an unattractive career option].
>
> Boot Camp [make the military an unattractive career option].
>
> Boot camp and all the running and physical stuff [make the military an unattractive career option]. I don't want to run ten miles.
>
> Boot camp, it is hard and physically challenging and you have to get up early.
>
> When people are in the military [teen was referring to boot camp] they make you, like, get up real early in the morning. They make you do, like, exercises and you have to be on your feet, like, everyday.
>
> They are always up early, work hard and they don't go to bed until late. It is just too hard, too strict.

Teens seem especially averse to the idea of being yelled at, a part of the military's image:

> I can't stand it when people yell at me.
>
> They're always yelling at you and they are mean.
>
> You hear stories about how drill sergeants get right up in your face and yell at you.
>
> People are in your face all the time.

I don't, like, want some grown guy yelling at me at 0500 in the morning.

[I don't want a] 300 pound DI screaming at me.

I don't want someone yelling at me.

[If] someone yells at me, I'm gonna yell back.

It just doesn't seem very fun. [What do you think makes it not fun?] I don't know, people yell at you and are mean to you.

Most, if not all, perceptions of boot camp come primarily from two sources: "war stories" and movies. Possibly, much of what teens think about boot camp comes from embellished and exaggerated "boot camp stories" from past and current military members. Consider what one teen in a focus group heard: "The training you have to go through—I've heard horror stories" [What stories?] "Boot Camp stories. I have a friend who has to get up early and run ten miles every day." Or, as one Millennial observed: "People who have been in it before tell about it, and it is way different than they show."

Telling boot camp "war stories" is a form of self-aggrandizing, an age-old tradition among military veterans—especially when the listener is unfamiliar with military service. People tend to recall times of trial in exaggerated form. Moreover, Hollywood's military movies have reinforced the popular image of initial training that pushes raw recruits to their physical and mental limits, of screaming drill sergeants who delight in making recruits miserable. It is not surprising, then, that teens have such an unrealistic image of boot camp. What is surprising is that boot camp constitutes such a major reason for avoiding the military.

(3) Fear of the Physical Rigors of Military Service. Closely associated with the fear of boot camp is the fear associated with the physical rigors of military life. Again, teens' perceptions and the reality of military service are quite dissimilar. Youth today may not be as physically orientated and tend to have exaggerated views of the physical standards required in the military.

During an interview, Bill Strauss (2000) commented on this very issue: "Millennials are not as physically fit, partially because they have specialized too much. Athletes are athletes, and others are not. Obesity has become an issue because of their sedentary lifestyle." Additionally, one Commanding Officer of a Marine Recruiting Station described today's youth as "fat, weak, fleshy soft" (Johnson 2000).

The military's emphasis on physical fitness apparently makes it unattractive to many young people. Here is what teens had to say in focus group discussions:

> [I couldn't do] the physical labor.
>
> It is too physical—I wouldn't want to do all that.
>
> I don't like the physical work.
>
> It is too physically demanding.
>
> Like, they make you run a lot.
>
> All I ever see is hard work, running, and waking up early.
>
> You have to be so strong all those exercises. I just couldn't do it.
>
> The pull-ups, it is too physical.

The low physical orientation of teens combined with misperceptions of the physical expectations in the military, tend to make the military unattractive with today's youth.

d. Long Obligation: A Late Start in Life

Four years is an eternity to a teenager. Interestingly, this generation tends to plan more than previous generations. Bill Strauss (2000) offers similar comments during an interview: "These kids plan more because of an optimistic outlook, they take a long view and therefore plan more." He also states: "Millennials want less stress, more balance, a lifecycle plan that makes sense. They will take orders and follow plans, if they perceive it will enable them to stay up with their peers and live a good life. The number-one thing for Millennials is that it makes sense for a well-ordered life." Many Millennials agreed with Strauss during focus group sessions:

> The commitment is too long. It's a lot of work. [Well, isn't college?] Yea, but then you have immediate gratification. There is a payoff with college. There doesn't seem to be a payoff with the military.
>
> If you have plans for college, you get side-tracked for 2-3 years. It puts you behind everybody else.
>
> [It's] the whole thing about leaving and losing time.
>
> Four years is too long of a commitment.
>
> You're four years older when you get out of the military—you get a late start on life.
>
> If you join the military and get out after four years, you have sort of wasted those four years if you don't stay in.
>
> The obligation is too long.

Contractual obligation is too long.

The idea of having to sign a legal, binding contract is distasteful to many teens. Typical comments during focus groups were as follows:

> It's a huge commitment that you can't back out of.
>
> I don't know what I want to do, but if I were to enlist and didn't like it, I'd have to stay in. Whereas college you can drop out.

Why do teens feel the obligation is too long? To start with, Millennials tend to define time differently. They are a generation born and raised with the computer and, therefore, tend to define time in brief increments. The time frame of Millennials is in minutes and seconds—owing to the immediacy of the Internet—and their attention span is the same. Tapscott (1998, 74) captures this perfectly: "As systems become real-time, and as information moves at light speed, the metabolism of youth culture is accelerating. This phenomenon shapes the way Gen Y defines time." Hence, four years of military service to Millennials is a long, long time. Additionally, because a traditional term of military enlistment is four years, teens tend to draw comparisons with going to college, which is also traditionally four years.

Incredibly, some teens believe that when one joins the military, he or she has done so for life. In the words of one teen: "When you join, you are pressured to stay in for a lifetime"; or, "If you join, do you have to stay in for a lifetime?" [What do you mean?] "Don't you have to stay in for twenty years if you join?" Incredibly, another teen said: "Once you're in it, you're in for life? Right? I wouldn't want to be in it for such a long period of time." These teens' comments illustrate how many view the

commitment of military service and further demonstrate how a lack of information can affect teens' views.

e. Military Lifestyle: Too Hard

Many Millennials appear to believe that the military is "excessively hard." They are quick to point out that the military is "too demanding" or requires too much of "a sacrifice." Colonel David Hackworth (1999) writes about this very point: "Gen Y'ers are whiners and quitters. Many come from single-parent homes and lack the basic values. Most are soft and spoiled—so unwilling to put up with the stress, training rigors and hard discipline of the past that about 50 percent put in their quit slip before their hitch is over." Amazingly, a large portion of youth tended to agree with Hackworth during focus group discussions:

> It's a lot of hard work. I'm too lazy.
>
> The military is too strict. Its not like you go to work come home, lay around and watch TV, or whatever, I seems like you are at work more often.
>
> [It is all] hard work.
>
> It seems very difficult. I don't know if I could do it.
>
> I don't have any interest in it at all—I have respect for anybody that can do it. I just couldn't do it. It is just too hard.
>
> You have to work too hard.
>
> I'm a huge wimp and it is too hard.
>
> They are always up early, work hard and they don't go to bed until late. It is just too hard. It is too strict.

[It's the] stress associated with being in the service—I already have enough stress.

It is so hard. [What is hard?] All the work—you can't live a normal life. You're restricted. It is too hard, too much work.

It is too stressful and seems like a lot of work.

[There are] lots and lots of demands—working long and hard all day, everyday.

You work your ass off for four years. It's too much.

It is real strict and demanding, seems hard. And you have someone yelling at you. I don't know if I could handle the pressure of it.

Low pay—when my Dad was in he didn't get paid very much. Now that he is out he makes twice as much.

All I ever see is hard work and waking up early.

It is too hard and I'm not that good.

f. Family Separation

Many teens have commented on their close relationship with their parents. Peter Zollo, from Teenage Research Unlimited, believes this differentiates today's youth from previous generations: "They are feeling a closeness to their parents, more so than we have seen in the previous couple of decades" (Strauss and Howe 2000, 122). As O'Reilly (2000) adds, "family and friends are paramount with Gen Y." And Chan (1999) observes: "The millennials are accustomed to a lot of support. It is almost like the super-parent has been protecting the child from the evils of the world where the Gen Xers saw the evil of the world." Strauss (2000) also comments on the relationship between Millennials and their parents noting, "Millennial parents have more difficulty letting their

children go. They enjoy and cherish their children." At the same time, Shumate (1999, 135) offers that this relationship could have an adverse effect on recruiting: "As the level of importance placed on family and location increases, the likelihood of enlistment decreases." In short, Millennials and their parents are apparently closer and more trusting than children and their parents in previous generations, and this "closeness" tends to make the military an unattractive career option.

In focus groups, teens echoed the same theme regarding their family. Many did not want to be away from their family and friends, and this influenced their opinion of the military. Consider some of their comments:

> [You're] separated from your family.
>
> My family is really important and I wouldn't want to be away.
>
> [All the] family separations and moving around [makes the military unattractive].
>
> Being shipped away from family [makes the military unattractive].
>
> Going to war in a different country and being away from family and friends [makes the military unattractive].
>
> Family separation [makes the military unattractive].
>
> Being away from family and moving [makes the military unattractive].
>
> I would not want to be away from my family that long.
>
> I have a friend who is going into the Marines and he doesn't know where he is going. A lot of it is being away from family. It is the unknown.

Family separation is a part of military life that teens seem to understand and another reason why the military is unattractive to them. Family separation was an especially dominant theme among young women.

g. Being Irrelevant

Mayfield (2000) writes: "With the Cold War won and communism all but buried, the military is viewed as irrelevant dead-ends on a career path." Goldman (2000) echoes the same thought: "One can hardly imagine an institution as hopelessly out of sync with the ethos of the Consumer Republic as the military. At a time of high employment and record college enrollment, a job that takes an act of Congress to get a raise is not attractive."

The end of the Cold War and major reductions of US Armed forces have contributed to the notion among youth that the US military has become irrelevant. In the late 1990s, popular opinion held that the military had all but finished fighting wars. Some have referred to this as the "victory disease" (Shumate 1999, 13). The most disturbing finding in Shumate's research is the attitude of American youth that the military is increasingly less relevant (Shumate 1999, 193). Colonel David Hackworth (1999) explains this as follows: "Generation Y-ers are without the same patriotic fever or motivation that their fathers and grandfathers mustered when they faced the Imperial Japanese, Nazi Germany or Cold War communists who, in their time, were all major threats to our security."

Youth tend to question the missions of the US military and its size. Some teens even question the military's very existence. In fact, a survey at Monterey High School indicates, incredibly, that 8 percent of teens do not believe the US needs a

military. (See Appendix A.) Below are several of the comments on this theme offered during focus group discussions:

> In the past we have had wars to defend our rights and it was patriotic. Now, we know the Army [military] needs people, but what for? There is no war. There is not a big prevailing cause. Basically, it is the pay and benefits.
>
> Fighting over land, money, or oil is ridiculous and that's what we fight over.
>
> If it were more important that the government was working for people maybe more would join the military. As it is, the military is deployed over and over and is not useful because they are not being used for any patriotic reason.
>
> Why is the military so eager to recruit? We don't need such a big military.
>
> We aren't being threatened by anyone, [so] why do we need a military?
>
> Our generation has no sense of history. WWI and WWII were direct threats to our country. What's going on in Europe or Saudi Arabia isn't really a threat to the US.
>
> Why? You put all that time and effort into it—there is no war or threat.
>
> Nobody in the world likes us because of our superior military—why be unliked.
>
> I don't feel US should be the world's police, therefore, me going off and fighting a conflict that really has nothing to do with the US is unattractive.

Much of why youth feel the military is "irrelevant" relates, once again, to their misperceptions of the armed forces. As Harold Kennedy (2000) states: "A growing chasm between the US military and the civilian world is undermining public support for the armed forces. And this widening gap makes it harder to attract young people to fill the ranks." Further, Shumate (1999, 176) writes:

> Youth are overwhelmingly more supportive of using the military as an instrument of foreign policy to protect the rights of American citizens around the world. They are slightly less supportive of employing military force to protect the economic interest of the US and youth are much more willing to join the military if they can identify clear benefits for the United States.

The comments from the focus groups tend to support these points. In fact, during one focus group, the valedictorian of the senior class stated that he did not feel "any obligation to serve in the military, under any circumstances." "Let it be somebody else's job," he added. Most teens however, were neither hostile nor negative toward the military in the focus groups—ambivalent is probably a better word. They tended to view the military positively, but most did not want to join—it was okay for someone else. Alternatively, as one Millennial put it, "It's just too much."

Millennials, as a generation, have not been asked to sacrifice much or been exposed too much adversity. They have generally had peace and prosperity in their lifetime and do not feel any collective need to defend the society that has so nurtured them. As Victor Thiessen of Halfax's Dalhousie University observes: "The word crisis does not appear in the teen lexicon. The Cold War is over. The Dow keeps going up. Teens have not had an experience where the world kept them back." (Strauss and Howe 2000, 178) Still, Strauss and Howe (2000, 207) write: "Millennials entered a less immediate endangered, yet more disordered unipolar world, in which America rides supreme."

2. The Military as an Attractive Career Option

The responses given by teens as to why the military is attractive are almost as varied as those that make it unattractive. Millennials tend to have a relatively high

opinion of the military as an institution, although they may not understand it, and they point to several positive features of military service. Although their views tend to be "an abstract, voyeuristic appreciation, tough, not a participatory one." (Derbyshire 2001, 30) Teens were asked: "What is attractive about the military as a career option?" In other words: "I might be willing to join because of _____." Students indicated the attractive features of the military as personal self-improvement, tangible benefits, and the esteem associated with service.

Monterey High School results of "Reasons to consider the military as a career option" are shown in Figure 6. These results are similar to focus groups responses with teens particularly emphasizing intangibles such as challenge, adventure, travel, and tangible aspects such as pay and benefits and money for college. For these students, the reasons to consider the military (from a structured list) in order of preference were: "adventure/travel" (21 percent), "educational benefits" (17 percent), "pay and benefits" (17 percent), "challenge" (12 percent), "exposure to the military" (6 percent), "a relative with military experience" (5 percent), "lack of options" (5 percent), "duty to country" (5 percent), "lifestyle" (5 percent) "other" (5 percent), and "appealing mission" (3 percent).

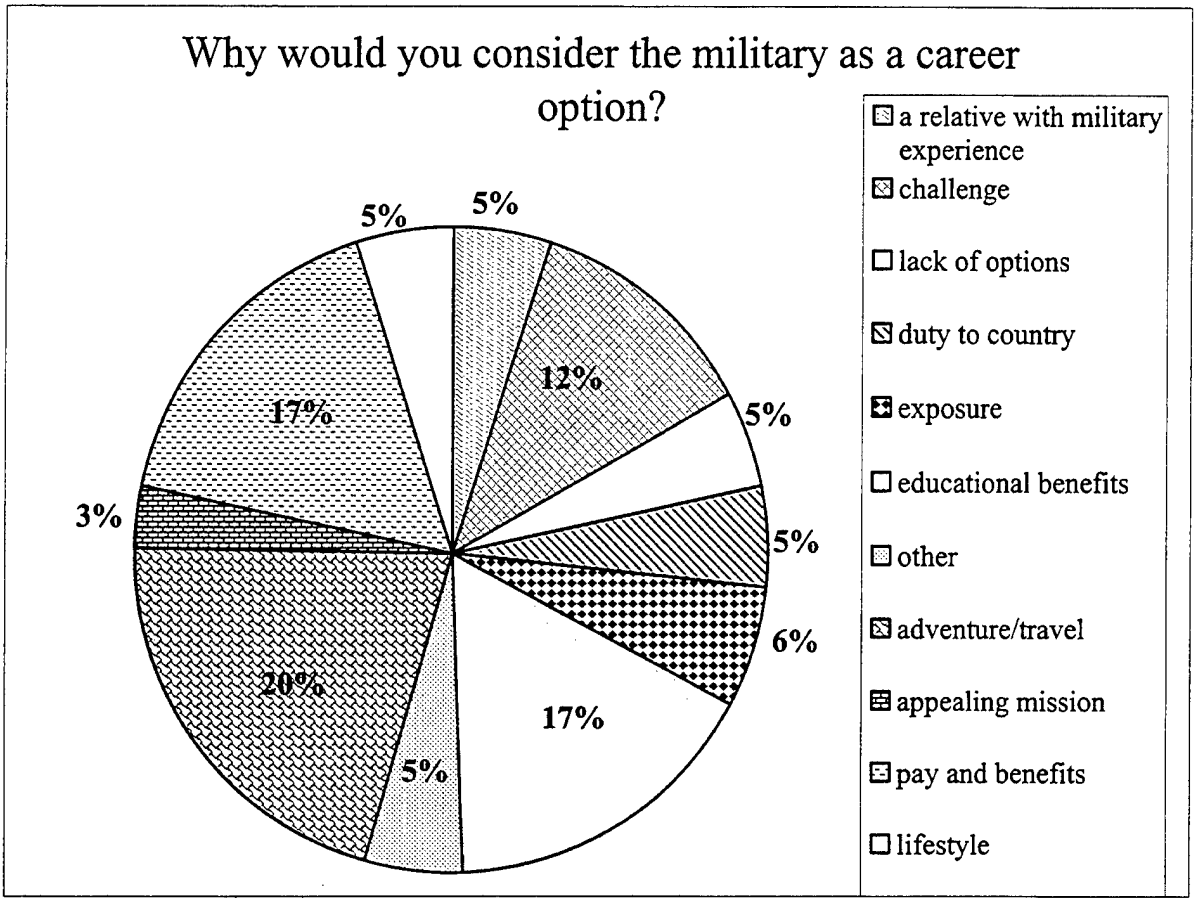

Figure 6. Monterey High School Survey: Reasons Why the Military is an Attractive Career Option

a. Self-Improvement

Interestingly, many of the same features that appear unattractive to Millennials are also seen as appealing. The most alluring feature of the military to teens in focus groups involved personal self-improvement associated with service. These very same factors were mentioned by many as a reason to avoid military service. Millennials, for example, tended to mention self-discipline, fitness, and maturity as self-improvement benefits of service.

(1) Self Discipline. As John Morgan, (*Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 2000) writes: "Kids are developing a sense of personal

responsibility, believe character does matter in leadership, and will come to resemble the GI generation (also known as the greatest generation) who were raised in the 20's, which is similar to the 90's in terms of moral decay. All of these trends indicate a mind-set and degrees of self-discipline that are compatible with military service." Many teens readily admitted in focus group discussions that they are not very disciplined and might want to change through service in the military. Examples of comments along this line are as follows:

> It [military] teaches you a lot of discipline.
>
> My brother was having a lot of problems and it [military] helped him.
>
> The discipline you learn [in the military] and people respect you.
>
> Certain traits you learn [in the military], like self-discipline.
>
> You learn self-discipline.
>
> You learn a lot of discipline. If you don't know what you want to do you could go in [military] and you'd come out with a lot of discipline and focus.
>
> [The military] teaches you stuff you can use outside the military—self-improvement.
>
> [The] discipline you learn.
>
> I'm thinking boot camp would be good for a bunch of us, not a bad thing. You know, it gets you fit and gets you started right.
>
> [The] self-discipline and honor [you get from the military].
>
> The discipline and self-improvement [you get from the military].

Many of the same teens who would mention "the loss of control" as an unattractive aspect of the military, would identify the "self-discipline you learn" as attractive. Perhaps, today's youth are, as Zoba (1999, 32) writes, "a jumble of contradictions. They struggle with doubt, yet remain righteously indignant; they are jaded, yet hopeful."

(2) Fitness. "You can get really buffed," one teenage girl offered as an attractive feature of military service. Here again, teens tended to be "a jumble of contradictions." Many youth who were quick to point out that the physical rigors of military service were unattractive just as quickly identified "getting in good shape" as a positive feature of joining. It is likely that these teens are attracted to the "idea" of getting in shape more so than the activity itself. Here is what the Millennials had to say about fitness during focus group discussions:

> You stay fit.
>
> [The] physical fitness [aspects].
>
> You get in good shape.
>
> You stay fit.
>
> It would take a lot of hard work and I have to be fit in order to be in it. So I guess, like, you get really fit.

(3) Maturity. Millennials have often been described as preoccupied with maturity, which may be encouraged by the autonomy and anonymity they find on the Internet (Tapscott 1999, 134). Not surprisingly, students in focus groups echoed the same thoughts, describing the military as a good place to "grow up":

You learn morals and life experiences—something you don't learn in high school.

It's got great benefits and you learn a lot about life.

All my friends that have served have grown up a lot. It forced them to mature a lot quicker. They all are better off for it.

It makes you a non-slacker.

The life experiences you gain.

You learn a lot of respect for other people and authority.

You learn a lot of respect about yourself and what you can do.

[The] personal growth [you experience], you mature and learn to work hard.

You learn a lot about life.

One high school senior was particularly discerning when he stated, "Maybe this would be your last time to be part of something."

b. Benefits

Millennials are keenly aware of the tangible benefits of military service such as training and money for college. In fact, tangible benefits of service were identified as attractive in every focus group. However, the military is no longer the sole organization with such benefits. Civilian employers have caught, on as Mayfield (2000, 6) observes: "The armed forces have counted on training and benefits to lure in recruits. However, civilian employers have caught on and offer better salaries, flexible work schedules, and are offering more training." Or, as Army Secretary Louis Caldera states:

"It is not principally about what I can do for my country. They want to know, 'how does this benefit me?'" (Moniz 2000, 20)

Some observers have suggested that the military's "money for college" may no longer appeal to today's teens. Nevertheless, money for college still resonated with teens in focus groups:

> You get money for college.
>
> The military will pay for your college.
>
> [You get] money for college.
>
> It will finance all of your college.
>
> [You] get your college paid for.
>
> They'll pay for your school.
>
> You get college money.
>
> You get to travel and get money for college.
>
> [The military] will pay for most of your college.

As Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 54) point out:

> The opportunities for postsecondary education for Gen Y are so numerous that for many, the question has shifted to where to enroll and how to pay for it. And, the expansion of financial assistance, particularly federal grants and loans, has made postsecondary education more accessible to more students. Increasingly, however, students are paying for college by going deeper into debt.

Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 257) carry this point further in suggesting that society's widening social safety net may actually be discouraging parents from assisting with an offspring's educational expenses:

> At the same time, parents are less dependent on the future earnings of their children than they were in the past. Expansion of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid has provided a financial safety net for older adults and dramatically reduced the number of elderly parents who live in poverty. This independence has reduced parent's personal incentives to invest in their child's education beyond high school. The lack of clear reciprocity of generational obligation provides them with more latitude in making decision about whether to support their children's postsecondary education.

Basic supply and demand theory states that, as more of a product is demanded, the price of the product will increase, all things being equal. Therefore, it goes with the increasing enrollment of Millennials in college. In fact, average real tuition costs and fees rose by roughly 50 percent between 1985 and 1995 for both private and public two-year and four-year institutions. (Asch, Kilburn, Klerman 1999) As the price of college goes up, young people may look increasingly toward the military to finance their education.

College isn't the only tangible benefit of service identified by teens during focus group discussions. The ability to travel and see the world was also mentioned by a number of teens:

> You get to see places you have never been before.
>
> You can travel a lot.
>
> You get to see the world.
>
> You go around and get to see the world.

You get to explore and see the world.

The word "benefit" appeared in many other comments by the teen regarding the attractions of military service.

[You get] long-term benefits—you automatically get approved for loans.

[You get] a lot of benefits.

They provide everything for you.

[You get a] double pension.

They offer a lot of assistance.

I hear they have great benefits.

[You get a] lifetime of benefits.

[The] medical benefits are good.

There are a lot of good financial benefits and programs.

I heard you get good benefits, like, you can fly free or something.

You get to retire when you're thirty or something.

At the same time, job security was mentioned as appealing:

You never have to worry about having a job.

[You get] good job training. It is easier to get a job after you have served.

[You are] guaranteed a place to be for the rest of your life.

You know exactly what you'll be doing for four years. Its not, like, you're going to be out of a job.

[You get great] job opportunities, benefits, and retirement.

[You get much] more job opportunities. You might be more marketable when you get out.

I hear it really helps you get a good job when you get out.

Although the military service may provide job security for some young people, this aspect typically is not a strong motivator for enlistment in the military (Shumate 1999, 127). Evidence suggests that youth are as concerned with economic factors, such as job security and learning a valuable skill, as much as they are with personal freedom. (Shumate 1999, 139)

c. Esteem of Service: Pride, Honor, and Respect

Teens in focus groups claimed to hold the military in high regard. In fact, in a nationwide Harris poll (January 2000), 51 percent of 18-24 year olds surveyed said they had "great confidence" in the armed forces. The military scored higher in this respect with young adults than did any other institution, including colleges, corporations, government, and medicine. (Mayfield 2000, 4) Teens who participated in the focus groups tended to support the results of the poll. Interestingly, teens almost seem fixated on the issue of respect—that is, having respect and giving it:

The respect you get. When you walked in everybody noticed you.

People respect what you do [when you are in the military].

It looks good, people respect you [when you are in the military].

People look up to you, they respect you [when in the military].

[The] pride and respect you have [when in the military].

Closely related to respect was the honor one derives from serving. Several teens in the focus groups remarked that serving in the military is honorable:

> The honor involved, the pride you get from serving [in the military]. The sense of duty you feel.
>
> I think a lot of people in the military are looked upon with honor. It takes a lot of guts to go in and fight for the country.
>
> [You get a] sense of unity and teamwork [when in the military].
>
> Serving your country is what the military should stand for, not for self.
>
> The honor you get [when in the military].
>
> [The] sense of pride, sense of self-worth, you feel like you are succeeding [when you serve in the military].

One study suggests that the steady state of truly negative views toward the military may actually be a positive indicator: "It is interesting to note that there has not been a significant increase in the number of youth never considering military service, suggesting that the status of the military in American society has not declined" (Shumate 1999, 111).

E. DEVELOPING PERCEPTIONS

The greatest challenge of recruiting is perhaps educating teens about the military and clearing away many existing misperceptions. The first step in accomplishing this is to understand the nature and causes of teens' misperceptions. Not one teen in this study had any first-hand experience with the military, with the exception of JROTC. So, where do they learn about the military? Where do they get such misinformation as to ask: "Can I eat chicken in the military? Can I drive a car? Can I go home?" (Jaffe 2000). Why do

they think, as in the present study, that "You have to stay in for life—right?" or, that "the military must offer big bonuses because so many die." When one considers the mindset of the individuals who asked such questions, it becomes clear that recruiting today has many obstacles to overcome in attracting Millennials to enlist.

Teens develop perceptions from any of several sources: family, friends, teachers, and the media. Teens readily attest to this in every focus group. Generally, if teens have a personal, credible source of information with military experience, their perceptions will be developed by the impressions of that individual. However, if teens do not have a personal, credible source, they will be influenced largely by the media—which has not always portrayed the military in a positive light.

Figure 7 presents results from the Monterey High School survey to the question, "What has had the greatest influence on your perception of the military service?" Taken individually, each category displayed in Figure 7 illustrates the strength of different influences on seniors' perceptions of military service. A family member is the strongest influence at 29 percent, followed by movies and television at 24 percent, and a friend at 12 percent. Advertising (10 percent), other (13 percent), teacher (4 percent), and the Internet (2 percent) make up the remaining influences.

The results suggest that teens are nearly split on what is the stronger influence, the media or a personal, credible source, as seen in Figure 7. Interestingly, when each media vehicle is summed and each personal credible source is summed, the results are: 36 percent believe the media is a stronger influence and 45 percent believe a personal, credible source is more influential in shaping their attitudes toward the military.

Moreover, one cannot account for the influence of the media on a teen's personal, credible source—who is just as likely to be affected by media portrayals of the military.

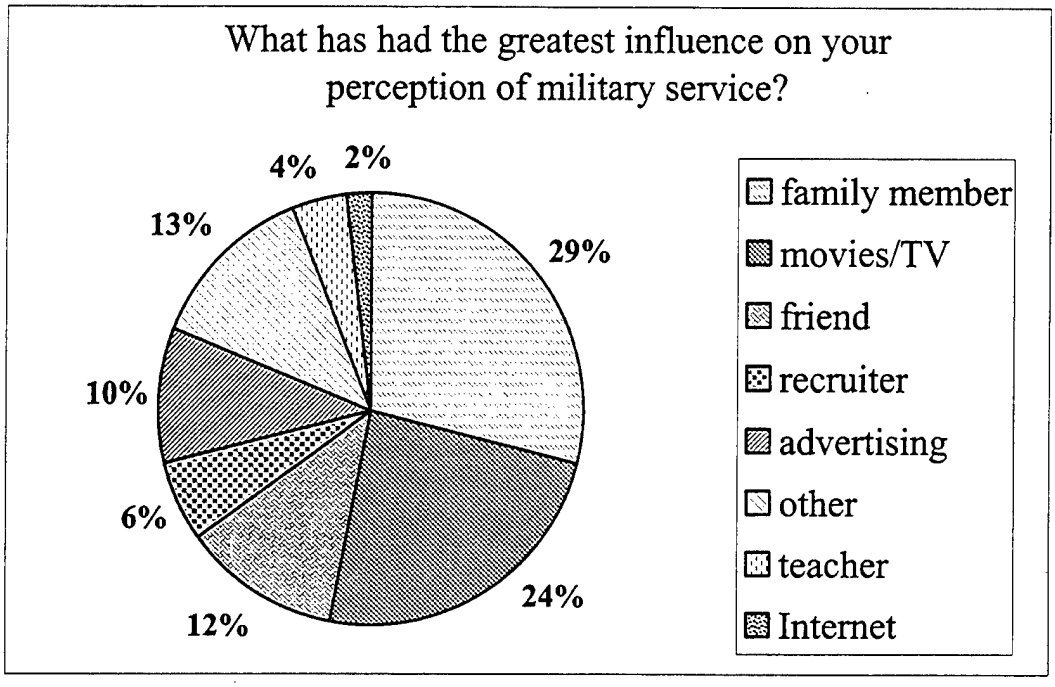

Figure 7. Monterey High School Survey: Greatest Influence on Perception of Military Service

The majority of teens in this study agree that the media are a powerful influence in developing their perceptions of the US military. Oddly, teens recognize the media have tremendous influence in shaping how they think; yet, they do not trust the media. "Millennials are deeply distrustful of the media," write Strauss and Howe (2000, 232). If you want to understand what the average teen believes about the military, go see the latest war movie. Teenagers indicated the two most popular war movies as *Saving Private Ryan* and *Full Metal Jacket.* Interestingly, as George Jaffe writes, "The most popular movie depicting military service is *Full Metal Jacket.*" This is an older movie (1987) that "Unfortunately, depicts the military during the dark era of the Vietnam War.

The movie seems to confirm to teens the worst impression of the military; suicide, abuse, death, and relentless violence." (Jaffe 2000) Jaffe is on target.

When teens were asked in focus groups what movies had helped to formulate their image of the US military, they mentioned the following:

Major Payne

Under Siege

Saving Private Ryan

Full Metal Jacket

Top Gun

RAMBO and *First Blood*

Hamburger Hill

Platoon

A Few Good Men

Rules of Engagement

Other media outlets mentioned by teens included:

Discovery Channel

CNN

C-SPAN

Documentaries on TV

Female teens tended to identify movies such as "*GI Jane*," "*The General's Daughter,*" and "*Courage Under Fire*," which deal with issues regarding women in the focus groups had as their chief influencers. Combine these recent movies with the nightly news stories on sexual harassment in the military and one begins to understand why many young women may have a negative view of military service. In almost every focus group, one or two women would mention sexual harassment, rape, or gender inequality as making the military unattractive for them:

> Women are not treated equal. [What makes you think that?] They, like, can't have all the jobs men can. I wouldn't join because it is unfair to women.
>
> I think in general all the military should work on, like, women and sexual harassment.
>
> It is unfair on the women, you don't get equal opportunity.
>
> [The] military is not fair to women, we don't get equal opportunity; I'd be intimidated by that many men. It's bad enough being one on one with a male—there is always that edge—never mind being outnumbered.
>
> You hear a lot about rape and sexual harassment. My parents wouldn't want me to [join].
>
> All the cool jobs are not open to women and you can't do it because you're a chick.
>
> Women aren't treated well. They are not treated equally.

These negative views of military service by many young women could make recruiting, already difficult, even more difficult. And especially so, when one considers that between 1998 and 2015, women are projected to increase their share of the labor

force from 46 percent to 48 percent, holding at 48 percent of the workforce through 2025. (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 5)

Teens mentioned that they also developed their opinions of the military from history classes as well as from recruiting commercials. When asked which recruiting commercials they had seen last, many said "the dude fighting the dragon" (they were referring to a television add for the Marines). Millennials tend to be skeptical of advertising. Indeed, their generation has been described as one that has been "marketed to death." As Neuborne and Kerwin (1999) observe, "Years of intense marketing efforts aimed directly their way have taught this group to assume the worst about companies trying to coax them into buying something." Debra Goldman (2000) places this skepticism more directly in a recruiting perspective:

> Over the last two decades, recruitment ads have gone over the top promising every kind of self-fulfillment: education, college tuition, job training and all the thrills and chills of an amusement park. A young generation famous for its Star Wars defense shield against commercial hype and false promises isn't biting.

Military recruiting commercials and ads seem to make the military an organization of contrast. Advertising ads espousing honor, courage and commitment do not adhere to what the media reports: sexual harassment problems, hazing, discrimination. This contrast serves to exacerbate the lost connection between military and society—making the military appear irrelevant.

Shumate (1999, 95) also addresses the issue of media influence: "Findings suggest that those individuals whose source of information about the military is movies/television may be selecting programs that portray the military in a negative light,

possibly reinforcing their preconceived notions about military service." Shumate (1999, 93) further writes: "Peers are identified as the primary source of information about the US military (36.5 %) for American youth. Families are mentioned as the second source with (49 %) of youth indicating a family member as a source of information. Lastly, the media (movies, news, documentaries) are mentioned as the third choice (33%)." The focus group findings of the present study differ from those of Shumate. In the present study, teens claimed to develop most of their perceptions of the military from some form of popular media. On the other hand, the results of the survey at Monterey High School tend to support Shumate's finding that families are a stronger influence than the media in developing teens' perceptions about the military.

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

College is the military's chief competitor for recruits. For a variety of reasons, more than nine out of ten teens today anticipate that they will attend college at some point after high school. Several studies support this finding. Actual rates of college attendance do not correspond to this, but it is apparent that military service isn't desirable after high school graduation.

Teens tend to recognize that each service has different elements, both attractive and unattractive. Teen perceptions have helped to create an identity for each branch of service. Knowing and understanding these identities can assist the military's recruiting efforts, especially with respect to advertising and public relations.

In general, Millennials do not find the military an attractive career option—mainly because of a lack of information, their sense that the military would impose too much control over their lives, a fear of certain risks and activities associated with the

military, the contractual obligation for relatively long service, separation from family and friends, and a belief that the military has become "irrelevant." The Five forces of influence, discussed in Chapter IV, provide a partial explanation for the importance and prominence teens place on these concerns.

Although teens may not find the military an attractive career option, they still tend to hold it in high regard. Millennials do identify some positive aspects of the military: personal self-improvement, tangible benefits, and esteem of service stand out among these aspects. It should be noted that most teens from focus groups who expected to join the military were doing so for selfish reasons, not for duty, honor, or country.

Millennials develop most, if not all, of their images of the military through the popular media. Family and friends also exert a strong influence on teens' perceptions of the military. A number of youth see a conflict between ads espousing the virtues of military service and what the popular media reports regarding sexual harassment, hazing, and discrimination. Most of what teens see and hear about the military in the popular media is negative. In the absence of a more positive public profile, many teens view the military as irrelevant.

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VI. RECRUITING STRATEGY ANALYSIS

A. INTRODUCTION

As discussed previously, broad social changes have affected the market for military manpower. At one time, research indicated that persons with several different personality types were drawn to join the military—those who were described as self-improvers, educational\skill seekers, escapists, and patriots. (Shepard 2000) More recent research categorizes the reasons why young people join the military as: historical interest, self-improvement, job/skill training, money for education, time out, get away/escape, and no other job prospects. (Shepard 2000)

Obviously there are many reasons for joining the military. Compounding recruiting efforts, however, are four main services (Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines) competing with each other in the same market (population group/demographic group) for qualified applicants. It is reasonable to assume that each service attempts to influence the demographic group differently. Understanding how the Services sell their product (enlistment in their particular branch) provides a means for understanding and analyzing their recruiting strategy. Randy Shepard, Senior Partner in the J. Walter Thompson Company (the advertising company for the Marine Corps) has developed a model of the military marketplace to better illustrate the competitive structure of the recruiting market. The model he presents is a continuum on which he also describes where the four services have traditionally sought to establish their market "niche."

Figure 8 represents Shepard's model with the attributes, or benefits of service, represented along a continuum from intangible (on the left) to tangible (on the right).

The Marine Corps holds down the smaller, intangible, emotional, or intrinsic side of the military marketplace model, while the Air Force has the strongest grasp of the tangible, rational side. The Army's breadth of appeal in all attributes places it in the middle of the military marketplace.

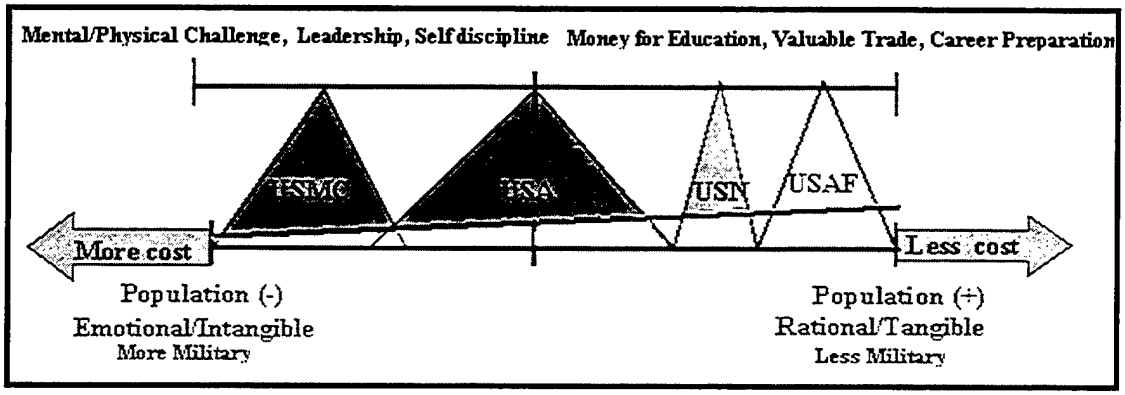

Figure 8. Military Marketplace Model

Source: Randy Shepard, Post-Cold War Propensity Trends- A Marketing Assessment, Senior Partner, J. Walter Thompson Company.

Concentrating on money for college, enlistment bonuses, and other financial benefits, the Navy has attempted to market itself through tangible benefits (i.e., the right side of the model in Figure 8) and is effectively being "squeezed out" by the Army and the Air Force. According to Shepard (2000), "the other services have much stronger associations to many of the same attributes with which the Navy seeks to associate itself." The statistics in Table 7 (below) tend to confirm this. Essentially, the Navy has been unable to differentiate itself in the military marketplace. Thus, it really has no brand, no clearly identifiable niche. It should be noted, however, that this finding is disputed to some extent by the results of the focus groups (see Chapter V), which show

that the Navy has a relatively strong identity in at least four areas: travel, environment of service, being a relatively safe service, and the opportunity to be a SEAL.

While each service offers benefits, each also has its associated costs. Two of these costs are risk of death or injury and the rigors of duty. According to Shepard (2000), the Air Force is perceived to have the lowest cost and the Marine Corps the highest. The Air Force, and to a lesser extent the Navy, is perceived as "safer" than the other services. These findings are supported by the present study, as discussed in Chapter V: teens by a margin of 2/3 and 1/3, respectively, indicated that the Air Force and Navy, are the safest of the services. Cost perceptions are probably a by-product of Hollywood as much as anything. Movies such as *Full Metal Jacket, A Few Good Men,* and *Rules of Engagement* have all supported the notion that service in the Marine Corps is filled with danger.

While service in the Navy may not be perceived as having a high risk of injury or death, it is seen as having other drawbacks. A 1996 YATS survey indicates that only seven percent of youth believe sailors are able to stay near friends and family. As discussed in Chapter V, family and friends appear to be more important to Millennials than in any previous generation, and one of the more unattractive aspects of military service is separation from family and friends. Members of this generation are less inclined to enter into a job that will require them to leave behind family and friends. Because of this, Shepard (2000) argues, sea deployments "grossly inflate the price of Navy benefits relative to a near competitor, the Air Force."

In evaluating the costs of service, it is important to understand their impact on each service's recruiting efforts. Navy recruiting struggled during fiscal 1999, and the service failed to make its annual recruiting goal. The Navy achieved its recruiting goal in the following year. While a strong economy has contributed to recent difficulties in recruiting, the perceived balance of the costs and benefits of military service also plays a role. The Marine Corps achieved its recruiting mission for 65 straight months from 1995 to 2001. This reflects both the strength of its recruiting strategy and the fact that those willing to pay the high cost of being a Marine "self-select" into the Corps. Additionally, the higher cost raises the expectation for a higher benefit: as the saying goes, "it costs more, but it's worth it," or "you get what you pay for," or "no pain, no gain." This is, in essence, the marketing strategy of the Marine Corps, and it helps to explain the remarkable appeal of this service over the years.

In effect, the Marine Corps cornered the market on intangible benefits of service, which is supported by the universal conscription exercise discussed in Chapter V. Research suggests that Millennials are attracted to this very notion of intrinsic rewards. The Navy, on the other hand, is suffering from a tight target market, where it has the highest cost for a product in less demand—money for college and job training. (Shepard 2000) The decline of this perceived benefit has affected the Marine Corps the least, and hit the other services hardest. The so-called "college benefit" can, in most cases, be bought more cheaply in the civilian sector. The other services have tied themselves tightly to the college benefit, but this benefit has lost most of its appeal and recruiting has suffered as a result. (Shepard 2000)

Shepard (2000) believes that, moving right on the model shown in Figure 8, the "relationship between price and product gets weaker until military service is more a price than a product." Therefore, those services clustered on the right—Air Force, Navy and, to a lesser extent, the Army—are much more price-elastic. That is, the Navy and Air Force price of entry is more sensitive relative to civilian competition. Lastly, the decline in sense of duty or obligation leaves those services on the right of Shepard's model with a "higher cost and less emotional appeal." (Shepard 2000)

Using data from the YATS and the Marine Corps Attitude and Awareness Tracking Study (AATS), Shepard (2000) has determined the attributes/benefits considered most important to youth. These attributes/benefits are presented in Table 7, along with the percentage of youth believing a particular service offers the most opportunities for fulfilling a given attribute. (YATS 1996) For instance, 44 percent of those surveyed on the YATS in 1996 felt that the Marines offered the most in developing self-discipline. The Marine Corps has historically targeted the so-called self-improvers. The Navy, on the other hand, has attempted to appeal to all types of youth.

Viewed another way, Table 7 demonstrates the perceived benefits of each service. It is also important to note that, as pointed out by Shepard, "benefits more in demand conform more to traditional definitions of career success (i.e., civilian definitions)." In addition, the benefits can be categorized as tangible or intangible. As demonstrated by its high scores (in Table 7) for attributes such as "develop self-discipline" and "leadership skills," the chief draw for the Marine Corps is mostly intangible. More telling, it is difficult to identify a clear trend for the Navy, which tends to have the lowest collective cores in the nine most sought-after benefits in the military marketplace.

Table 7. Attractive Attributes and Benefits as Identified by Youth, Percentage by Service

Priority of Military Attributes	Attribute/Benefit	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
1	Job Security	24	10	10	13
2	Do something to be proud of	19	12	20	20
3	Personal freedom	19	11	7	17
4	Preparation for future job	26	13	13	16
5	Learn valuable trade, skill	26	13	11	21
6	Getting money for education	29	15	10	13
7	Develop self-discipline	24	7	44	5
8	Develop leadership skills	26	9	28	12
9	Mental/physical challenge	26	5	49	4

Source: Commander Bill Hatch, Naval Postgraduate School, Recruiting Brief, 2000.

B. USMC RECRUITING STRATEGY

Lieutenant General Garry Parks, Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, believes that "recruiting is making marines, wining battles, and creating quality citizens." By all accounts, the Marine Corps is accomplishing General Parks' goals. (Parks 2000)

The Marine Corps relies on a unilateral, focused recruiting campaign plan. The three pillars of this plan are a systematic approach to recruiting, an aligned marketing strategy, and the Marine recruiter. "Employing the doctrine of systematic recruiting and remaining vigilant in meeting the demands of the needs of an ever-changing dynamic marketplace" has given the Marine Corps a competitive edge among the services. (Parks 2000) More importantly, however, the Marine Corps relies on its most effective weapon—the Marine recruiter—to ensure victory.

The Marine Corps was the first service to adopt and develop a systematic approach to recruiting. It has continued to exploit this "system," refining it over the years. The system consists of a detailed process that identifies the needs of recruit prospects and then matches these needs to the benefits of service in the Marine Corps. The system also allows Marine leaders to identify and analyze inefficiencies and recruiter shortfalls. One senior Marine interviewed for the present study had this to say: "A recruiter cannot fail if he or she adheres to the principles of the systematic approach to recruiting" (Macmillan 2000).

The gist of the marketing strategy in the Marine Corps is to challenge potential recruits with the question, "are you good enough?" All print media and TV and radio commercials follow this theme, giving the Marine Corps a single, focused, marketing strategy that enables it to corner the right side of military marketplace model (see Figure 8). This marketing strategy is perfectly aligned with the target market that the Marine Corps is after: self-improvers looking for a challenge, self-discipline, and leadership training. While this may be self evident, the Marine Corps still offers job training and educational bonuses combined with the mystique of being a "Marine." In essence, the Marine Corps has effectively created a unique "brand" for itself and appears quite good at differentiating the Marine "brand" from that of the other services.

The real strength of the Marine Corps recruiting strategy is, as previously mentioned, the Marine recruiter. He or she is the best advertisement the Marine Corps has. The Marine recruiter is expected to sell himself/herself, to have the prospect say, "I want to be like that recruiter, that Marine." The Marines are able to do this by sending their best and brightest to recruiting. Additionally, a tour in Marine recruiting is

considered a "power billet," making a former recruiter more competitive for promotion. Consequently, legions of Marines seek to be recruiters, knowing full well the tremendous demands and sacrifices associated with that type of duty.

C. USN RECRUITING STRATEGY

The Navy, on the other hand, while having much strength in its recruiting process, does not enjoy the same success as does the Marine Corps. The reason for this lies in the fact that, while the Navy employs many facets of a strong recruiting organization, it lacks an overarching strategy that binds together the whole effort. An examination of the Navy's sales and marketing philosophies highlights certain failures of the system.

In 2001, the Navy's recruiting command set out to establish a new sales methodology. A civilian contractor was assigned the task of overseeing the instruction and implementation of AchieveGlobal, a proven sales technique used by several sales organizations, including the US Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Implementation of the new approach is expected to be complete by the end of fiscal 2001. This is not to say the Navy's recruiting command has operated since 1973 (the beginning of the All-Volunteer Force) without a specific sales methodology. In fact, one of the strengths of the Navy's recruiting effort is its particular way of selling, a technique that has been followed by both officers and enlisted personnel for a number of years. Successful recruiters spend considerable time in the field honing and reshaping their selling skills.

The transition to AchieveGlobal indicates that the Navy is turning toward a new selling philosophy. In the previous selling doctrine, recruiters focused on quickly determining a potential applicant's dominant buying motive and then illustrating how the Navy might help him or her achieve that specific goal. Through the AchieveGlobal

method, recruiters will spend more time helping applicants determine their goals and getting to know the applicants, as well as screening them for potential service in the Navy. This "softer sell" technique will most likely help forge a stronger bond with the Millennials, based on the results of the present study.

Navy recruiting is equipping itself to meet the Millennials on an individual basis, but there is still the issue of how to market the product of becoming a "sailor" to this generation. Shepard's (2000) study makes a very strong case for the Navy's failure to establish a brand identity in a crowded marketplace. As suggested in the universal conscription exercise (see Chapter V), the Navy lacks a strong niche in the market for Millennials.

"Mission/environment" was found to be the strongest draw to the Navy, based on the results of focus group discussions, but this is a rather nebulous category. This category is also a significant dissuader, since it requires family separation, a strongly unattractive aspect of military service among today's teens. The current Navy recruiting strategy may be able to solve the niche problem. The Navy's new recruiting slogan, "Accelerate Your Life," attempts to develop a brand of "challenge, adventure, travel, and learning." This "get moving," "challenge yourself" approach may have wide appeal to Millennials. Millennials seem particularly interested in the tangible aspects of service that this ad campaign sells. Additionally, it is likely that the campaign will appeal to the Millennials' desire for self-improvement and job marketability, as discussed in Chapter III.

While market identification and selling skills are essential ingredients to the success of a sales organization, there is a much more important facet to any group effort, sorely missing from Navy recruiting. The failure to set a clearly-defined direction for the command undermines all efforts by Navy recruiters. This point can be illustrated very simply. The US Marine Corps Recruiting Command has published a "Recruiting Command Plan," in which the Commanding General specifies, in clear terms, his expectations of the members of the command. Further, it highlights how objectives and core functions of every aspect of the command, from officer and enlisted recruiting to information systems, work toward achieving the strategic objectives of the command.

Although various pieces and parts of Navy recruiting are working well independently, they are failing overall because of the lack of a clearly-defined, unifying, underlying strategy. Viewed through a systems model, the "throughput" variables do not achieve the overall objective without a definitive input variable.

D. INCONGRUENT STRATEGIES

Recruiting success depends on identifying and penetrating the target market, as well as offering enlistment incentives, tangible or intangible, that appeal to the target. The Marine Corps is successful because it has a carefully-crafted recruiting program that appeals to its target market. The success enjoyed by the Marine Corps owes much to the fact that it has effectively aligned marketing strategy with recruiting strategy, ensuring that these strategies are mutually supportive and inextricably linked.

The Navy's recruiting strategy and policies are misaligned. The Navy is unable to capitalize on a clearly identified marketing plan that works in concert with an objective strategy laid out by its recruiting command. The Navy has been unsuccessful at creating

a niche. The increased competition from the Air Force, and to a lesser extent, the Army, has "squeezed out" the Navy from a portion of the market. These factors will increasingly challenge the Navy in meeting its recruiting goals. However, with a new sales training program for the recruiting force, and a new advertising firm developing a market strategy, Navy leaders may be well aware of these shortcomings and working to remedy the situation.

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VII. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

This study looks at the next generation of American youth and their attitudes toward the military, primarily through qualitative methods. Data for this study were collected through 36 focus groups, including 677 teenagers at nine high schools in six states; informal and formal surveys; and an extensive literature review. Heavy emphasis is placed on the literature review to develop a conceptual framework for describing the Millennial culture. The literature review is further used to explain why Millennials may view the military as they do, and it is employed throughout the study as a reference point for discussing the focus group results. Additionally, a formal survey on attitudes toward the military was administered to seniors at Monterey High School to shed some additional light on the focus group findings.

B. SUMMARY

The military's "war" for personnel can be won. In recent years, all services, with the exception of the Marine Corps, have suffered setbacks in the struggle for recruits. The military must "get connected" with the next generation, Millennials, to win this "war." Understanding what these teens think—what their values, attitudes, and beliefs regarding military service—is the first step in successfully recruiting the next generation of American youth.

Generations are defined by the social, economic, and political issues of the day. Millennials have faced relatively little adversity or sacrifice, and this has operated to shape the generation's belief structure through a common experience, albeit a positive

one. The Millennial generation's sheer size, economic clout, family dynamics, diversity, and affluence characterize and empower them. And their generational core characteristics are a product of the environment in which they have developed.

Millennial attitudes and beliefs are a radical departure from those of previous generations. For example, they appear more conservative and "old fashioned" in many ways. The age-old problem of race relations appears to be a "non-issue" with most Millennials. They care passionately about family, friends, and the environment. Indeed, Millennials claim the environment is their chief rallying point.

The workplace of the 21st Century will see many changes as Millennials come of age. Three workplace characteristics rank high among Millennials as they consider their future career paths: education and continuous learning opportunities, flexibility, and appreciation for employees' quality of life. Although the military can provide some measure of these workplace characteristics, flexibility and quality of life are normally not among the military's most attractive features.

A combination of the five forces—the New Economy, the information revolution, the omnipresent media, Boomer parents, and the education revolution—has influenced the Millennial generation and helped to form its outlook on life in a very unusual and powerful way. The New Economy has given Millennials a lifetime of unprecedented prosperity as well as an optimistic outlook on the future. The nation's economic prosperity is the chief reason for increased returns to a college education. Teens no longer view the military as a "secure" and "safe" place where one can be insulated from the vagaries of the economy.

Computers and the Internet are omnipresent in today's youth culture, and technology has become the most dominant force on the Millennial culture. Technology empowers youth—enabling them to become seekers, rather than receivers, of information. Vast improvements in communications technology have also elevated the importance of the popular media, giving them a powerful ability to exert influence on today's youth. Teens today have instant access to the realities of life, right at their vary fingertips. They can see and hear everything the media have to offer—the good, the bad, the ugly—and with unprecedented immediacy.

Involved, demanding, and strict, "baby boomer" parents are placing intense pressure on teens for high achievement. Boomer parents are not inclined to promote military service for their children, possibly because of their own experiences during the Vietnam era. At the same time, the so-called education revolution, which began when the first Millennials were born, adds to the expectations and pressure that most teens feel. Increasing emphasis on higher education has also given today's teens the perception that college is the only path to a well-paying, satisfying career. Indeed, Millennials are going to college in record numbers, making higher education the chief competitor for military recruiting.

Teens recognize that each military service has different features, both attractive and unattractive. These perceived features operate to determine the brand or identity of each service. Knowing and understanding these identities can assist the military services in formulating their advertising campaigns to appeal to youth most effectively.

Seven themes emerged from the focus-group sessions as to why the military may be unattractive to Millennials. These are:

- Loss of control
- Lack of information
- Fear of death, boot camp, and physical rigors
- Long obligation of service
- Difficult, demanding lifestyle
- Separation from family and friends
- Being part of something irrelevant

At the same time, several aspects of the military may appeal to Millennials. Teens in focus groups identified the following:

- Opportunities for personal self-improvement, such as self-discipline, fitness, and maturity
- Tangible benefits, such as college money, travel, technical training, and medical benefits
- The social esteem and respect associated with serving one's country

It is worth noting that many negative views are influenced by teens' basic ignorance of the military, while teens tend to have a fairly accurate understanding of the attractive features of military service. Obviously, this works against military recruiting efforts, which have typically emphasized the benefits of service.

Each branch of the military attempts to influence the recruiting market of youth differently. Understanding how the services sell their product (enlistment in their particular branch) provides a means for evaluating their recruiting strategy. The Marine Corps relies on a unilateral, focused marketing and recruiting campaign plan. The Marine Corps is successful because it effectively aligns recruiting policy with marketing strategy, ensuring that they are mutually supportive. The Navy's recruiting approach is

working well independently; however, it may be failing overall because of the lack of a clearly-defined, unifying, underlying strategy. The Navy's recruiting and marketing strategies are basically not synergistic.

The Navy has apparently been unsuccessful at creating a market niche. Increased competition from the Air Force, and to a lesser extent the Army, has squeezed the Navy out of some portions of the youth market. However, with a new sales training program in the recruiting force, a new advertising firm, and a fresh marketing strategy, the Navy is currently working toward a solution.

C. CONCLUSIONS

The Millennial culture model, discussed in Chapter IV, shows the interplay among five factors of influence (economy, technology, media, parents, education) and their impact on the recruiting-age population. The interconnected relationship of these five forces has formed a generation of young men and women who view the military much differently than did previous generations. Innovative approaches by military recruiting may be needed, then, to connect with Millennials.

Several *general conclusions* can be drawn from the study:

- Many of today's teens do not view joining the military as being successful. Success to teens today consists almost entirely of going to college. The military is viewed as an option for teens who do not have the means for college, and college is the "default decision" for most teens who are undecided on what to do after graduating from high school.
- Higher education is the military's chief competitor for recruits.
- Teens apparently know relatively little about the military. At the same time, the military and its recruiting arm apparently know very little about today's teens.
- Focus group research suggests that the unattractive elements of military service (the "dissuaders") are far stronger among teens than are the

attractions (the "persuaders"). Further, teens tend to personalize the dissuaders and view the persuaders more in general or abstract terms. The dissuaders relate to "me" in the words of teens; the persuaders, on the other hand, relate to other people, to "them." Thus, teens in focus groups might state, "The military is an unattractive career option because *I* would lose control over my decisions"; whereas, teens discussing attractive features of the military might state, "They [the military] will pay for *someone's* college education."

- Strong trends exist across different schools and states, suggesting that certain focus group results can be generalized across the country.
- Barring any economic setbacks, recruiting will become increasingly more difficult. Teens in this study represent the initial wave of the Millennial generation and, thus, may not completely represent the entire culture. As the bulk of Millennials mature to recruiting age, all things being equal, recruiting is likely to become considerably more difficult.
- The information revolution has greatly influenced the mindset of today's teenager, much of which we are only beginning to understand.
- Focus group methodology is a rich form of discovery.

Specific conclusions drawn from the study are:

- Teens' lack of knowledge about the military suggests a growing chasm between society and the military, and a near absence of any military influence in the lives of many Millennials.
- The absence of war, economic turmoil, and social upheaval in the lives of Millennials has resulted in a relatively comfortable, easy existence for many teenagers, which may be why they tend to view the military as excessively hard, too much of a sacrifice, and too risky.
- The highly controlled and structured lifestyle of many teens has increased the value of their personal autonomy. Because the military is not seen as "successful," teens are unwilling to sacrifice their autonomy to gain any benefits of military service. This issue of control must be addressed to recruit Millennials.
- A major shift in the military's public image—perhaps toward humanitarian or environmental protection—may be necessary for it to become more "relevant" in the minds of many teenagers.
- Because of this generation's fixation on self-improvement—i.e., going to college in record numbers and a lifetime of organized, growth activities—the military may become more attractive as a vehicle for self-improvement.

- The media are a dominant force in shaping public opinion about the military, largely due to the reduced exposure of the military in society, the end of the Cold War, the defense drawdown, unclear missions, and an unidentified threat. Added to this is the disappearing notion that military service is a "civic duty."
- Parents of Millennials may be exercising greater influence with their children regarding career choice than did parents in pervious generations.
- Each service has a unique brand with teenagers, and this brand or identity can work for or against recruiting efforts. The Army's identity is the most difficult to brand, and this service has the lowest appeal among teens. The Air Force and the Navy are chief competitors, with similar brands in the same market niche. The Marine Corps has the strongest identity in a particular niche; however, it does not have wide appeal across different markets.
- The Marine Corps' success in recruiting is due largely to its successful brand and predominant market niche with a generation that is very brand conscious.
- The Navy's recruiting challenges may be a result of a weak brand, fierce competition in its market niche, and a lack of synergy between its recruiting and marketing strategies.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS

The principal action needed to ensure a steady supply of military recruits is educating the target market on the realties of military service. Morgan (2000, 2) recommends this very step: "We need new tools to engage and educate the millennial generation, to bridge the gap between today's youth and a noble military heritage that can lead to a life of consequence." Johnson (1999, 1) also comments on this notion: Millennials "want more information and facts to confirm career direction. They want to seek long-term employment within a given industry for stability.... Recruiting strategies should include a career focused, streamlined, technology savvy, factual, and results orientated approach.... Recruiting will have to be done more on their terms." The military can take several steps to accomplish this, as discussed below.

1. Substantially Increase Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC)

JROTC represents the best vehicle for educating and exposing Millennials to the military. JROTC has the added luxury of educating not only Millennials, but also their primary "influencers," teachers and parents. An expanded JROTC program could become a method for the military to "grow its own" recruits. At least one author, Derbtshire (2001, 6), feels the same way: "The much-discussed rift between the military and the rest of society might be closed a little by allocating more resources to Junior ROTC." Additionally, the presence of JROTC on high school campuses might reduce the growing trend of forbidding military recruiters from school grounds. According to Shields (2001, 1), "approximately one out of four U. S. high schools forbids military recruiters from setting foot in the schoolyard or having access to students' names and addresses. In the 1998-1999 academic year, 5,465 high schools denied access to Air Force recruiters and 4,884 schools did likewise to the Marines."

JROTC would also act as a "test period" for an interested teen to find out about the military. This test period was recommended by several teens: "Have a trial period, like a week, where you sign them up; take them out; teach them the basics. You put them through what it's going to be like and what it's going to take. At the end of that, they can say, 'Hey I want to sign up.'" Alternatively, as suggested by another teen, the military should offer "a test period before you sign up."

2. Embrace Community Outreach Programs

Any community program that portrays the military in a positive light will have an impact on recruiting. Morgan (2000, 2) writes: "What is needed is an educational program to reach 12-14 year olds that stresses the value of a life of consequence—an endeavor that enriches the human condition at the local, regional, or national level.... We need community recruiting that involves present, former service members as well as the traditional methods." Such programs would enhance exposure and educate the military's target market. These programs can be especially useful in the urban centers, where exposure to the military is minimal, and where a good portion of the military's recruiting market is likely to be found in the future.

3. Present the Military in a Variety of Positive, Domestic, and Humanitarian Roles

Mayfield (2000, 5) writes: "From attitude surveys, it appears men and women of the new generation, on the whole, are more inclined than their Gen X predecessors to join something in which they can feel pride and a sense of a purpose." To be truly attractive to Millennials, the military needs to be seen in roles other than warfare. Indeed, many of the military's missions through the 1990s have been humanitarian and domestic. Showing the military in these roles is likely to make it a much more "relevant" organization in the eyes of Millennials. This is the strongest recommendation from teens, to make the military a more "meaningful" career option. They said:

> Promote the humanitarian missions the military does, not just war.
>
> Emphasize the military helping other people; that would appeal to me.

> The military comes off as overbearing. When I think of the military, I always think of fighting a war. Try to show those other things they do besides just wars.
>
> Make it seem a better thing to do or more important [relevant]. Make it seem like a good place, not just for wars and paying for college. You should want to go there because you want to go there, not just for college.
>
> We need a worthwhile cause. Right now, nobody wants to go to fight in a foreign country that doesn't threaten us—like Kosovo.
>
> There is really no reason to join; show us a reason; give us a reason why we should join.
>
> If it were more important that the government was working for people, maybe more would join the military. As it is, the military is deployed all over the world.

Along with increased education and exposure, the military should consider employing different recruiting strategies, more likely to appeal to the unique desires and concerns of Millennials. It may be able to accomplish this by using the strategies discussed below.

4. Adopt a More Value-Based Recruiting Strategy

A recruiting appeal that emphasizes values, in addition to the tangible benefits of military service, may better resonate with today's teens. Millennials seem to see certain intangible benefits of service, such as self-improvement and esteem, as being most attractive. Once again, Morgan (2000, 3) discusses this: "Values, moral accountability, and personal honor have become increasingly important to young Americans. In this area there is no other institution that can compete with the US military...expanding our strategy beyond monetary inducements to articulate the real, vibrant allure to service in the military."

Likewise, Hackworth (1999, 7b) also suggests this approach: "Young people clearly want a challenge. They want to be molded into warriors, not treated like spoiled kids.... Young people today are looking for a challenge, not to be coddled." And Shumate (1999,14) agrees: "Recruiting strategies that highlight certain attributes inherent to the military service such as physical challenge, teamwork, leadership, and duty to country may be more successful in attracting more youth into the military."

Bill Strauss (2000) offers the same observation in an interview: "The military should target Millennials through the classical military virtues: honor, courage, commitment, trust, loyalty, teamwork. And we [military] must show parents' service in the military is becoming part of a team-valued community, a modern, yet traditional approach. Additionally, the military must show parents and kids that the military is a safe place, where their kids won't die in a training accident." He even suggests the military provide incentives to keep parents involved, using e-mails, newsletters, and Web pages.

Secretary of Defense William Cohen once directed the services to prepare new recruitment strategies that emphasize patriotism and challenge. At the time, it was felt that "the previous strategies emphasizing individualistic concerns...were not successful in attracting individuals oriented more toward less selfish goals" (Shumate 2000, 14).

5. Sell the Persuaders; Educate the Dissuaders

The military should focus its recruiting approach more on "dissuading the dissuaders"—that is, educating teens and their parents about the military and dispelling the myths that cause Millennials to reject military service. The present study suggests that the dissuaders of service far outweigh the persuaders in the minds of today's teens.

Teens tend to mention many more reasons for *not* joining the military than for joining; they also tend to personalize the negative ("why *I* wouldn't join") and depersonalize the positive ("*someone else* might be attracted by this"). Furthermore, it appears that teens can describe the positive aspects of service more accurately than the negative aspects. This suggests that the military's traditional recruiting emphasis on advertising the benefits of service is working—at least to the extent that teens are "getting the message." Yet, apparently, that is not enough: even though teens are aware of the benefits of service, their perceptions of the negative aspects are more convincing. And these negative perceptions, as discussed above, often reflect teens' ignorance of the military. One approach is to address directly the various dissuaders in recruiting advertisements. For instance, the military could acknowledge in advertisements that teens may lose some personal control, but that they are joining something larger than themselves, "a winning team," and learning self-discipline, respect, and honor. Teens are well aware of the loss of control—although, they tend to have an exaggerated notion of this loss. What they do not seem to have is a good understanding of the potentially positive side of most dissuaders.

A former commander of Navy recruiting once suggested, in jest, that the Navy advertise to young women that wearing a uniform every day has its benefits: "Join the Navy, and you'll never have to worry again about what to wear to work!" This is a good example of what teens may need to hear: that certain aspects of the military may be different, or even more demanding, than those in civilian life; but that this can also be a good thing. Thus, separation from family and friends may occur often in the military; but it allows one to grow personally in many ways, to strengthen one's character and

independence, to make new friends, and to make an important contribution of service to one's country.

The exaggeration of dissuaders by teens is even more reason to focus recruiting strategies in this direction. Such a change would help to reduce the misperceptions of military service. Additionally, this strategy may also alleviate skepticism (a core characteristic of Millennials) of the military being truthful, recognize a major concern of teens, and project a more accurate image of military service in the minds of teens and their influencers.

6. Target Junior and Community College Dropouts

The military should target junior and community college dropouts, 40 to 50 percent of whom fail to complete a degree. This could provide the military with a rich market of high-quality recruits. Asch, Kilburn, and Klerman, authors of *Attracting College Bound Youth into the Military* (1999), recommend that the "Services should significantly expand the recruitment of college dropouts." Further, Stevenson and Schneider (1999, 70) observe: "An analysis of national data indicates a greater proportion of students who go directly to work after high school are low academic performers, more likely to have behavioral problems in school, such as skipping classes, getting suspended, and troublemaking." It is exactly these individuals that the military attempts to recruit after the coveted high school graduate.

7. Adopt Recruiting Strategies that Complement College, Rather than Compete with It

As Bill Strauss (2000) observes: "The number one thing for Millennials is that it makes sense for a well-ordered life. The military can persuade Millennials to join by

identifying benefits later in life, enroll old people endorsing the military as part of a life that makes sense. These kids, because of an optimistic outlook, take the long view and therefore plan more." Millennials appear exceptionally concerned with their ability to always be competitive in the labor market—thus the strong draw to college. The military can capitalize on this need by portraying the military even as a stepping-stone to college. For example, such a recruiting strategy could emphasize that the military would not only help pay for college, but would teach the skills necessary to *succeed* in college—such as self-discipline, focus, and perseverance.

A number of teens mentioned this very point during focus groups. Common statements included: "It makes you more competitive to have both college and the military on your resume"; and "The military teaches you self-discipline and respect, things that will help you latter in life." A strategy that identifies the military as an institution where one can become generally more competitive is likely to resonate with teens. And, perhaps, using former, highly visible and successful military members would help to illustrate the competitive advantage that one may have in life as a veteran.

8. Put the Fun Back in the Military; Use More Humor

Image-building advertising campaigns are less effective with Millennials. They will better respond to humor, irony, and the unvarnished truth. Humor has been used for years to sell products. Humor or irony is not only appropriate; it would help to brighten the image of the military—seen as too serious and too much work in the minds of many teens. Humor is also likely to put a human face on the military. It would demonstrate to skeptical teens that the military could be a fun place to work. Several teens in focus groups suggested somewhat of the same: "Make it [the military] look like it's fun. It

looks like it's just work, work, work, work"; or, "Show them off having *fun*, being *normal*."

9. Adopt Unconventional Recruiting Strategies

To recruit Millennials most effectively, the military must meet them on their terms and on their turf. Azoulay (1999) comments on how to sell (recruit) Millennials: "Gen Y has come to expect quick, easy connection and interaction; they also have a strong need for community; and they look for products that create an ambiance rather that provide a certain function.... The retailer has to move from a 'selling' mentality—one in which the primary goal is the sales transaction—to a community mentality.... Retail operations will better reach Gen Y by hosting events—using the space and resources of the organization to build connections." Further, Neuborne and Kerwin, (1999) write: "Years of intense marketing efforts aimed directly their way have taught this group to assume the worst about companies trying to coax them into buying something." Marketing campaigns should be subtler, more unconventional than in the past. The Marine Corps' sponsorship of the "X games" is an excellent example of the type of unconventional recruiting strategy the military could pursue.

Besides exposure, education, and different recruiting strategies, the military can adopt other techniques to make military service a more attractive career option for Millennials. Four such approaches are discussed below.

10. Explore Lateral Entry

Lateral entry options are likely to appeal to the Millennials' need for control and flexibility in the work force. Additionally, this may alleviate critical shortages in certain fields by allowing civilian experts to enter the military laterally as opposed to at the

bottom. As one report recommends: "A proposed program allowing lateral entry into the Navy and Marine Corps would address the flexibility demands of Generation X and Y by allowing them to experience military life without the long-term commitment. Such an initiative would encourage movement between the military and civilian workforce." (Birnbaum et al. 2000, 16)

11. Lobby the Entertainment Industry

The US military needs a better balance of media coverage and the amenities of service as portrayed through advertising. The popular media are responsible for creating many of the negative perceptions teenagers have of the military. Therefore, the military should change its approach to a lobbying effort—much as the military does with congress. The media, and in particular the entertainment industry, have likely damaged military recruiting efforts with movies such as *Full Metal Jacket*, *The General's Daughter*, and even *Saving Private Ryan*. These movies tend to show caricatures and concentrate on isolated, negative aspects of service. A lobbying approach would reap long-term benefits, but not do much to improve short-term recruiting prospects.

In fact, as Lawrence Suid (1996, 1) observes in *Sailing on the Silver Screen: Hollywood and the US Navy*, for more than ninety years, "the US armed services have provided personnel, equipment, and facilities to help in the production of movies portraying the American military in war and peace. The services believed this assistance aided their recruiting campaigns as well as their efforts to inform the public and Congress of their activities and procedures." Suid (1996) refers to the relationship between Hollywood and the military as one of "mutual exploitation and mutual benefit." In many cases, the armed services were able to barter for changes in movies by offering

cooperation, and this cooperation often meant significant cost savings for moviemakers as well as greater realism in the use of military ships, planes, tanks, or other equipment. In a concluding comment on the Navy's relationship with Hollywood, Suid (1996, 259) writes: "At the same time, with or without assistance from the Navy, Hollywood will continue to use the glamour inherent in Navy uniforms, jet planes, and esoteric ships to create exciting images that will attract audiences to the silver screen."

Advances in the use of computer technology for special effects and simulation may mean that the military's influence over Hollywood will diminish as the years progress. When moviemakers are able to create a "virtual environment" of the glamorous jet planes and esoteric ships that Suid mentions, what use will Hollywood have for the military? And what will happen as a result to the military's influence in Hollywood over how it is portrayed in film? Perhaps the time is right to explore taking a more aggressive, "lobbying approach" toward the entertainment industry. At least, this is certainly an area for further research.

12. Develop a Variety of Enlistment Contracts

Most teens believe all military contracts are for four years of obligated service—which tends to be an eternity to them. The whole notion of four years forces a teen to think of the military as an alternative to college—also traditionally four years. By offering a variety of enlistment contracts, and aggressively publicizing these options, more youth may opt to join the military for a couple of years, and be less inclined to view enlistment as an alternative to college and see it more as a *complement* to college. In fact, Professor Charles Moskos (2000) surveyed 430 undergraduates at Northwestern University to determine the feasibility of such an option. He determined that "about one

in ten [had] some propensity for the two-year or 15-month option." Teens in focus groups in the present study were no less vocal in their recommendations of how to improve military recruiting: "Shorter contracts—when people are stuck in something they don't like, they probably won't do as well."

13. Nationally Align the Navy's Recruiting Strategy with its Marketing Strategy

As stated, the Navy's approach to recruiting is working well independently; however, it needs synergy to become more effective. The Navy's recruiting command should publish a comprehensive campaign plan that lists the goals and objectives of each element of the command. Such a tool would allow for better focus, better coordination, and a more unified approach to recruiting. In effect, this would make recruiting and marketing strategies and the implementation of these strategies synergistic. Further, Navy recruiters should change the model of selling benefits to selling "themselves." Such an approach is more likely to resonate with Millennials and would require the Navy to send its "best and brightest" to recruiting. Additionally, this approach would assist in transforming Navy cultural values and empowering Navy recruiters.

The very best step to improve military recruiting would be to educate teens on the realities of military service. Any efforts to this end would enhance the prospects for success over the long term. Teens' ignorance of military service runs deep and is very widespread, if comments in the focus groups are in any way representative of Millennials' views across the nation. However, ignorance in this case is a two-way street: teens' lack of information on the military is matched only by the military's apparent lack of information in understanding teens. Only through positive exposure and

education will the military be able to change the prevailing mindset of today's American teenager and make the military a more appealing career option.

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APPENDIX A. INFORMATION RELATED TO MONTEREY HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY

MEMORANDUM

From: John Crawford and Ian Andrews
To: Ms Harray, Mr Cruzan, Mr Clark
Via: (1) Professor Alice Crawford
(2) Professor Mark Eitelberg
(3) Major Andrew Wilcox

Subj: MAOS PROPOSAL

1. **Intended Goals:** To develop and distribute a survey examining the values, attitudes, and beliefs of Generation Y toward military service.

2. **Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to examine the attitudes, values, and beliefs of our generation as they relate to military service. The research will assist the Online Recruiting Station (ORS), Naval Postgraduate School, study in identifying possible recruiting strategies. Additionally, we will learn the nuances of surveys, basic statistics, report writing, and briefing techniques.

3. **Execution:** With the assistance of Naval Postgraduate School mentors, we will develop and administer a survey to administer to high schools on the Monterey Peninsula. The result will be a written report and a briefing to MAOS leadership.

4. **Milestones:**

Proposal	15 September
School approval	1 October
Survey developed	1 November
Survey administered	1 December
Report completed	15 January
Briefing completed	1 February

1) Do you believe the U.S. still needs a military?

Yes No

Comments:

2) What are your plans after high school?

-College
-Military
-Enter work force
-Other_____

3) Have you ever considered the military as a job option?

1 strongly considered 2 considered 3 no opinion 4 not considered
5 would not consider

4) Why have you not considered the military as a career option? (please circle one)

-lack of information	-doesn't match career objectives	-college bound
-risk of life/limb	-loss of personal freedom/control	-personal beliefs
-parental pressure not to join	-lack of exposure	-other_____

5) What are some of the reasons you might consider the military as a career option? (circle all that apply)

-a relative with military experience	-exposure	-appealing mission
-challenge	-educational benefits	-pay and benefits
-lack of options	-other	-life style
-duty to country	-adventure/travel	

6) If you <u>had to join the military</u> (were drafted) which service would you join?

-Army -Air force -Navy -Marines

Why did you choose this particular branch of the military?

_____

_____

_____

7) What has had the greatest influence on your perception of military service?

-family member	-recruiter	-teacher
-movies/TV	-advertising	-Internet
-friend	-other_____	

8) In your opinion, what would make the military a more attractive career option?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9) Please tell us about yourself;

You are: Male Female

Freshmen Sophomore Junior Senior

MONTEREY HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

Do you believe the US still needs a military?

Yes	92
No	8

What are your plans after high school?

College	85
Military	6
Labor market	5
Other	3

Have you ever considered the military as a job option?

Strongly Considered	3
Considered	30
No Opinion	8
Not Considered	16
Would not Consider	43

Why have you not considered the Military as a career option?

Lack of information	3
Risk of life/limb	6
Parental pressure not to join	3
Doesn't match career objectives	25
Loss of personal control/freedom	11
Lack of exposure	3
College bound	23
Personal beliefs	18
Other	3

What are some reasons you might consider the military as a career option?

A relative with military experience	5
Challenge	12
Lack of options	5
Duty to country	5
Exposure	6
Educational benefits	17
Other	5
Adventure/travel	21
Appealing mission	3
Pay and benefits	17
Lifestyle	5

If you had to join the military (were drafted) which service would you join?

		1	2	3
Army	13	mission/environment	--	--
Air Force	44	fly	mission/environment	family
Navy	27	mission/environment	travel	family
Marines	16	best/challenge	family	mission/environment

What has had the greatest influence on your perception of military service?

Family member	29
Movies/TV	24
Friend	12
Recruiter	6
Advertising	10
Other	13
Teacher	4
Internet	2

Male	55
Female	45

What would make the military more attractive?

Pay increase
More freedom
More Information
Relevance

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APPENDIX B. FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE

WHERE _____

DATE _____

MALE _____

FEMALE _____

FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE

Introduction:

1) Subject of the study:
   a) Background
   b) Importance of the study to me, US military and country.
   c) Purpose: To understand the feelings/opinions of your generation as it relates to military service

2) Concept of Focus Groups
   a) Your opinion counts and is important.
   b) No such thing as a wrong answer to questions/discussion
   c) Please be frank

3) Slide Presentation on Generations
   a) Defining a generation
   b) Factors influencing the Millennial generation.
   c) Demographics
   d) Bright future

4) Discussion:
   a) How many plan on going to college? _____ Why college?
   b) How many plan on enlisting in the military? _____ Why?
      1) Do any of your immediate family members have military experience?_____ Other Relative?_____
   c) How many will be doing something other than college or the military?_____
   d) What about the military is an attractive career option?
   e) What about the military is not an attractive career option?
   f) What are the four branches of the service and what is each branches function?
   g) How do you form your perceptions on the military? Family? Friends? Hollywood?

h) If the US government enacted universal conscription which service would you join, and why? Ask each student for an answer.

i) What recruiting commercials, if any, have you seen that you can recall? What branch of the service was the commercial for?

j) When you think of a Marine what images come to mind? Navy? Army? Air Force?

k) What movie best depicts the military?

l) Do you think there is still a need for the military? Yes_____ No_____ Why? Why not?

m) How would you describe your generation?

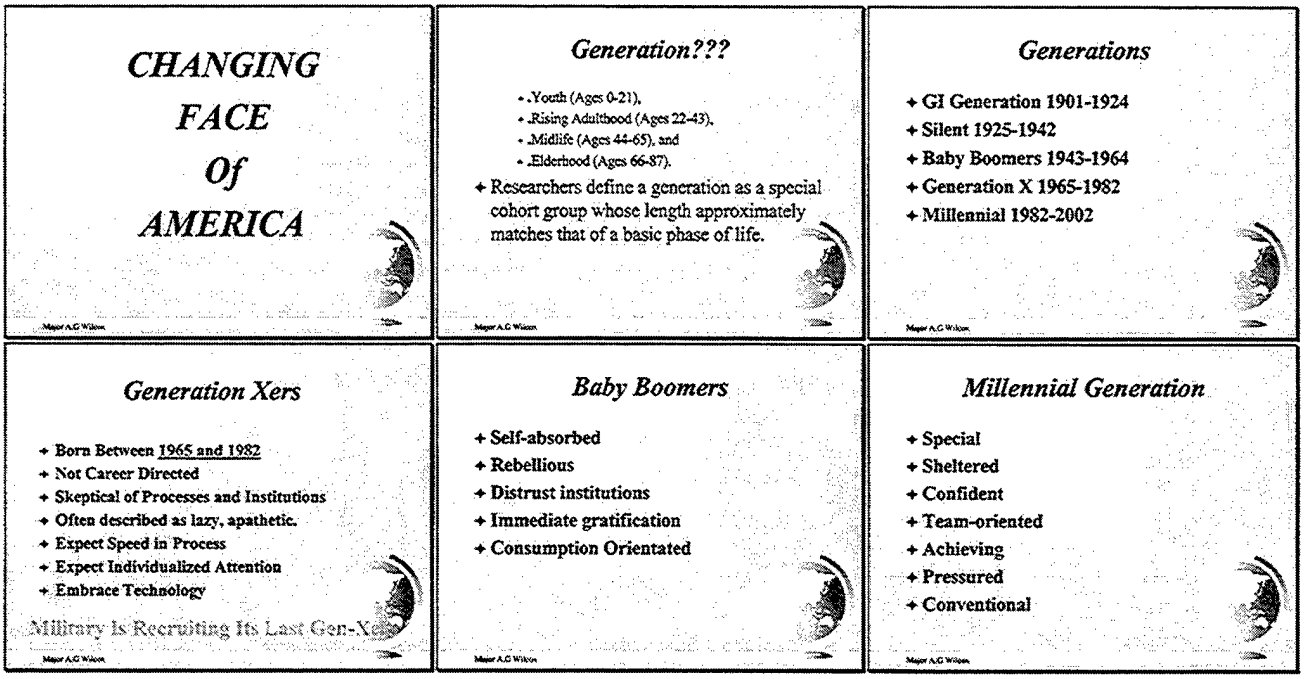
n) What characterizes your generation?

o) What do you consider to be your generation's values, beliefs, attitudes?

p) What are the forces that have shaped and molded you as a generation?

Do you have any questions of me?

APPENDIX C. FOCUS GROUP SLIDE PRESENTATION



Generation Y

- Generation Y is the name often attributed to those youths born after 1982.
  - "NetGeners"
  - Echo Boomers
  - Millennials
- In 1999, this generation was already estimated to be anywhere from 30 million to 60 million strong--with several more birth years ahead.

Major A.G Wilson

Youth Population Growth

Ages 15-19, 1995-2025

- 1995 18,064,000
- 2025 23.5% Growth (22,304,000)
- **Regional Concentration**
  - MW 2.2% Growth
  - NE 13.5% Growth
  - S 22.7% Growth
  - W 56.5% Growth
- **Radical Variation By R/E Groups**

Major A.G Wilson

Generation Y

- Generation Y is surrounded by technical achievement and has been the first generation to grow-up on-line
- Generation Y views religion as an important part of their life and are less likely to engage in premarital sex, drinking, or drug use than their Baby Boomer parents

Major A.G Wilson

Generation Y

- Have only known record lows in unemployment and inflation, while the average family income is up.
- Child safety devices targeting the youngsters of Generation Y have swamped the market to include drawer latches, stove knob covers, furniture corner cushions, toilet locks, I-see-you rearview mirrors, and bicycle helmets.

Major A.G Wilson

Generation Y

- Families with the lowest child-to-parent ratio in American history
- Students in public schools are wearing uniforms in greater numbers every year.
- 67 % of high school seniors will continue onto higher education.
- Generation Y youths are drinking less alcohol than young Americans in the 1970s or the 1980s and consuming fewer drugs.

Major A.G Wilson

Current 18 Year-olds

- **Always Been MTV**
- **Always Been a Woman on the Supreme Court**
- **Always Been Able to Get Their News on CNN or USA Today**
- **Travel to Space Has Always Been in Reusable Spacecraft**
- **John Lennon and John Belushi Have Always Been Dead**
- **Always Been Women Astronauts**
- **Never Dialed a Phone**

Major A.G Wilson

Generational Theory

- **Theory of the "Fourth Turning"**
  - **American Revolution 1776**
  - **Civil War 1860**
  - **Depression/ WWII 1940**
  - **Next Event 2010??**
- **Hero Generation**
  - **Civic minded like GI's**

Major A.G Wilson

APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (TRANSCRIBED FROM AUDIO-TAPE RECORDINGS)

[i= comment or idea repeated]

Monterey High School Focus Groups

What makes the military an unattractive career option?

"I'm too opinionated"

"Why would I want to join something where people are going to yell at me"

"Recruiters lie to you"

"Scared of dying in combat"

"You can make so much more money in the civilian economy"

"Lack of a real purpose"

"When you go to boot camp people scream at you and want to make you cry."

"I heard you can't have facial hair and you have to shave everyday."

"People think of the military as a dorky thing to do."

"What happens if you're walking along and someone steps on your shinny shoes? Do you have to go clean them again?"

"People are afraid to go into the military because they are afraid they won't be able to do what they want to do.

"You don't have the freedom or opportunities as others because of the commitment you have in regards to what is unattractive."

What are your Generational Characteristics?

"Our generation is more focused on being nonconformist."

"A lot of people look at it as yea the Navy will pay for my college, but four years of my life is being taken away and a lot of people look at as I want my own life."

"Our generation knows that you have to have a higher education to get a good job."

"People are educated enough to know that you can't go into the military and then get a good job."

"The appeal of the internet is that you can find the information you want not that information finds you."

What makes the military an attractive career option?

"Guaranteed a place to be for the rest of you life"

"You get to see the world."

What would interest you in the military?

"If I had more information on what they have to offer, I don't know anything about it."

"If were more important that the government was working for people maybe more would join the military. As it is, the military is deployed over and over and is not useful because they are not being used for any patriotic reason."

"Educate people on military; what it is; what is does."

"Why is the military so eager to recruit—we don't need such a big military."

"If we aren't being threatened by anyone why do we need a military?"

***Notes*: Most students do not know the difference between officers and enlisted and that you need a college degree to be an officer.

If the nation were threatened would interest you in the military? "I'd be less likely, because it would be more dangerous." "It is somebody else's job."

"What's the difference between the service?"

"The Army is to ordinary."

Aptos High School FG

What makes the military an unattractive career option?

War, i

"You have to follow a lot of rules."

"It's a lot of hard work."

"Boot camp"i

"Working for the government."

"Owned by the government."

"Loss of control."

"You could die."

"You have lots of rules and you have to follow them or, you go to the brig."

"It's a lot of hard work."

"Working for the government, I don't agree with all the stuff they do. [What stuff?] You know, like secret stuff against other countries."

"The extreme nature of the work."

"I just don't want to be owned by the government."

"Death."

"You could die."

"Someone is always telling you what to do."

"Women are not treated equal [What makes you think that?] They like can't have all the jobs men can. I wouldn't join because it is unfair to women."

What makes the military an attractive career option?

"I don't have a lot of money for college and they offered me the job I wanted."

What is unique about your generation?

Technology

Why college?

"It is the best future."

Notes: What does the Army do?

"They fight. [What do you mean?] Combat. [Where do they fight? What kind of environment?] I don't know."

Osbourn High School Focus Groups

Why are you going to college?

"To be successful" i

"Get a better job" ii

"It is the only way to get a job."

"It opens door to good jobs that pay good money."

"More job opportunity."

"You can't support yourself very well without a college degree."

"My career objectives require me to go."

"I just physically want to learn more."

"It is expected of me." i

"Prestigious"

"More knowledge" i

"Higher salary"

"Going to get away from Mom and Dad, although I'm just far enough away where I came make my own decisions, yet close enough to call them if I need help."

"Pressure from parents"

"Your more on your own. It's a growing up process. Your parents baby you. You have restrictions—it is an issue of control."

"To get away from Mom and Dad, more freedom."

"The military is a lot more to take on."

Why the Military as a career objective?

"My dad served 25 years and we have had a comfortable life-style. I'd like to bring the values and beliefs my Dad brought me from the Marines Corps to my kids one day."

"Benefits, pays for school, helps you get a better job when you get out."

"There are two different militaries; one enlisted and one officer. I'd never go enlisted. I've seen how they treat their people—it is not good: poor housing and poor medical attention."

"Women in the military especially get treated badly."

"He's a guy. It doesn't matter. It does matter. They have an edge. I've seen how women in the military get treated and it isn't good."

What are the forces that have shaped your generation?

"Internet, the world is getting smaller."

"There has been a big change in values compared to our parents. In my Mom's generation, women started working. It is practically unheard of for a women not to work today."

"Fast paced, families are not as tight."
"Influence of media and movies." i
"Parents and international events."
"Parents, School, Media, Church, Technology"
"Economy it has always been good."
"Technology" iiii
"Dual parents working."
"Pressure from educational competition."
"We want to be more independent rather than have someone control everything. Our parents are too controlling"
"Digital Stuff"
"Sports"

What makes the military an unattractive career option?

"I don't want someone yelling at me." "Someone yells at me, I'm gonna yell back."
"You have to go to boot camp."
"Your not treated well."
"Family separations" i
"Moving around"
"Low pay—when my Dad was in he didn't get paid very much. Now that he is out he makes twice as much."
"I already consider myself an adult. I don't need to go in to the military to get my life together.
"Physically demanding"
"All the cool jobs are not open to women and you can't do it because you're a chick."
"You don't know where they are going to send you."
"I'm open minded and opinionated and would have a hard time controlling my temper and not say anything."
"The prospect of going to war and getting killed."
"Sent to war and die."
"I know so little, I really don't have an opinion."
"The control they have over you. I like the idea of fighting for my country, but I don't like the control issue."
"Lack of being comfortable and that's really what life is all about. You avoid things that are not comfortable. My friend in the AF had to do a bunch of push-ups and run a lot. It's a whole big comfort thing. I'd be uncomfortable."
"They form you the way they want you to be--strip you of your identity and brainwash you."
"People go to college to get away from their parents—to get all the freedom. But going in the military is like double the discipline of your parents. It is the opposite of the freedom you would enjoy in college."
"Waking up early."

"Our generation has no sense of history. WWI-WWII were direct threats to our country. What's going on in Europe or Saudi Arabia isn't really a threat to the US."

"You gotta work too hard. I'm just too lazy."

"It's all about living for your country. I think you should live for yourself. It is too much of a sacrifice."

"I find the hard sell the recruiters use as a real turnoff."

"The recruiter constantly calling and following me—it is a real turnoff"

"Why should any 18 year old enlist and make 1200 a month? If you want more people, pay them more."

"Like, they make you run a lot."

"Stress associated with being in the service—I already have enough stress."

What makes the military an attractive Career Option?

"Travel" i

"Job Security—you never have to worry about having a job." i

"You stay fit. Physical fitness" .i

"Teaches you stuff you can use outside the military—self improvement." ii

"Good job training. It is easier to get a job after you have served."

"Money for college." iii

"Benefits" ii

"The discipline you learn." i

"People respect what you do." ii

Where and how do you develop your perceptions about the military?

"Family" ii

"School"

"Friends"

"Media (Full Metal Jacket, CNN, Top-Gun)"

"ROTC"

What are your generational characteristics?

"Rely to heavily on technology and parents money."

Notes:

Dependent kids don't see the military as life threatening as non-dependents.

Nearly all teens feel they are expected to go to college.

2 out of 18 felt they were not pressured to go to college.

Class felt Saving Private Ryan best depicts the military.

East Granby High School Focus Group

Why are you going to college?

"It is part of the outline of my life; go to college, get a job, start a family, settle down."

"Being able to depend and only rely on yourself."

"Get a good job latter on." i
"Continue education" i
"It makes you well rounded"
"Experience"
"Better opportunities" i
"More pay" i
"Learn more"
"You need an education to get a good job, make money, support children later in life. A good job is when I don't have to rely on anybody else in life."

Why Military as a career objective?

"Helps me get a better job—the self-discipline, self-improvement, mental Stabilization."
"It differentiates you from the regular college graduate—if you also have military service."
"Makes me more marketable."

What are the forces that have shaped your generation?

"Parents" ii
"Technology" ii
"Media"
"Economy" ii
"Education"
"Diversity of ideas."
"Pressure and expectations"
"Societal Pressures to get a good job, the high expectations."

What makes the military an unattractive career option?

"Homeless veterans create a negative perception—the military makes them crazy."
"Risk of life in a major conflict"
"Being away from family—moving."
"People build it up to be really bad, but no one takes the time to really find out."
"Not enough people know about it."
"You might not be good enough."
"This generation is use to independence an freedom more than the last, people have more money, and they can do what they want. The military reduces your independence, you have to follow orders; people tell you what to do."
"People that have served don't enjoy it"
"Isolation and pressure"
"Hard to settle down"
"Possibility of going to war" i
"It's a huge commitment that you can't back out of."
"There are a lot of guys and they are not very nice."
"It is unfair on the women you don't get equal opportunity"

"Boot camp: it's hard and physically challenging."
"Restrictions placed on you."
"Loss of personal freedom."
"Getting up early"
"Fear of boot camp"
"Being ordered around"
"Too structured"
"Different values—too traditional—my values are different."
"You can't express yourself."
"Physical labor"
"Being controlled all the time, being told what to do."
"The military is not fair to women, we don't get equal opportunity: I'd be intimidated by that many men. It's bad enough being one on one with a male—there is always that edge—never mind being outnumbered."
"Being driven to your last core to please somebody striving for the ultimate rank and position."
"When people are in the military they make you, like, get up real early in the morning. They make you do, like, exercises and you have to be on your feet, like, everyday."

What makes the military an attractive career option?

"Power you get."
"Sense of pride, sense of self-worth, you feel like you are succeeding."
"The respect you get. Other people respect you. People respect you."
"The job opportunities and benefits—retirement."
"See the world"
"Self-improvement"
"The ability to fly"
"Power and respect you have"
"Sense of duty you feel"
"Sense of unity and team work"
"Challenges"
"Personal growth, you mature and learn too work hard."
"Self-discipline and honor."
"Friendship and bonds that you form."
"Serving your country is what the military should stand for, not self."

How do you develop perceptions about the military?

"TV"
"Discovery Channel"
"Movies"
"C-span"
"Full Metal Jacket"
"Saving Private Ryan" i
"Military Video Games"

"Parents"
**Teens felt the Media was more influential

What are your Generational Characteristics?

"Informal"
"Freedom and liberty"
"Rebellious"
"All about change"
"We care about appearance. We want to look good. It is all about how you represent yourself."
"Pressure to succeed"
"Breadth of opportunity"
"Use of technology"
"Confident"
"Constant competition: school and sports. You always have to be at your best."
"We're pounded from the day we are born to do well in school."

What are your Generational Values?

"Money, Friends, Respect"
"Equality by society and system."
"More religiously orientated"
"Pressured"
"Expected too succeed, go to college."
"Make money, get rich quick, and retire early."
"Success, pursuit of education"
"Being with family"

What picture comes to mind when you think of

Solider: dirty, strong, distinguished, ground pounding with camouflage gear. Pictures of Vietnam; boot camp; someone yelling at you; guys wearing camouflage running around in trees.

Sailor: dressed in white, sitting--using in technology; open ocean; white uniform; guys on a boat; brave;

Marine: DI hat, sword, brave, patriotic, honorable; someone with a gun; very disciplined; " I think of the sword"; clean strict, orderly, perfect.

Airmen: flight gear, helmet cockpit, daring, exciting, laid-back, Top-Gun.

Notes:

2 out of 20 did not feel pressured to go to college.

Students put more validity in a personal credible source; however, media is credited with being more influential.

Teens believe 10-30% of those that wear a uniform are killed in combat.

Saving Private Ryan is the movie that best depicts the military.

Wilbraham & Monson Focus Groups

Why are you going to college?

"Everybody is doing it."
"Stepping stone for a good job."
"More job opportunities."
"Get away from Mom and Dad."
"I have a career minded family where it is expected."
"Pressure, it is expected of us."
"Prolong the job quest!"

What are the forces that have shaped your generation?

"Parents" i
"Media"
"Technology" i
"Pressure"
"Lack of Wars" i

What makes the military an unattractive career option?

"When you're not good enough to go to college, you got in the military."
"Why? You put all that time and effort into it—there is no war or threat."
"Nobody in the world likes us because of our superior military—why be un liked"
"There are so many underhanded things going on with the government—I wouldn't want to be a part of that."
"Your four years older when you get out of the military—you get a late start on life."
"You work your ass off for four years. It's too much"
"I just don't know anything."
"Going to war in a different country; being away from family and friends."
"Family separation"
"Being told what to do—I like to run my life my way, make my own decisions." i
"Seems like a lot of work."
"Lots of demands—work long and hard all day, everyday."
"If you go to college you go to class and then you can do what you want."
"Waking up early and the discipline."
"It like going to a place that's even more strict than my house."
"I don't feel US should be the worlds police therefore, me going off and fighting a conflict that really has nothing to do with the US is unattractive."
"It is too stressful."
"Too much of a sacrifice."
"300 pound DI screaming at you."
"You don't have a choice about anything."
"I just don't know anything about it."
"Women aren't treated well, they are not treated equally."

What makes the military an attractive career option?

"Having military and college on your resume looks good."

"Well balanced structured life"
"Discipline"
"Money for college" ii
"Respect and confidence"
"Maybe your last time to be part of something."
"You learn morals and life experiences—something you don't learn in high school."
"You get to shoot guns"
"Get in good shape"
"Long term benefits—you automatically get approved for loans."
"You learn self-discipline"
"You get to play with lots of cool toys."

How do you perform perceptions on the military?
"Friends"
"Media, it always reports bad stuff about the military." i
"Full Metal Jacket"
"Movies" (Saving Pvt Ryan, Few Good Men, Top Gun, Platoon, Full Metal Jacket)
"History classes"
"TV"
"Commercials"
"Family member"

What are your Generational Characteristics?
"We think about the future more."
"We have more power at our fingertips"
"Desensitized to violence—because we have been exposed to it through the media all our life"

What are you Generational Values, Attitudes, and Belief?
"Pursuit of education"
"Job opportunities"
"Because we have access to more information, we tend to question everything."

Notes:
Causalities 20-30%.
All teens' felt going to college is expected of them.
Teacher who has been teaching for 30 years feels they are a generation that "believes they have a right to voice their opinion on anything at anytime—the "why" generation." Teens tended to agree.
Almost all perceptions come from movies.

Granbury High School Focus Groups

Why are you going to college?

"If you don't go to college it is going to be hard to get a job."
"Get a good job that pays a lot of money"
"More money, you can get a better job."
"Get out of Granbury."
"Most jobs require it"
"Get away from Mom and Dad."

Why Military as a career objective?

"It gives me four years to think about what I want to do when I get out—what I want to do with my life."
"I grew up with a military father and ROTC has influenced me."
"I want to get the signing bonus and it helps pay for college."

What makes the military an unattractive career option?

"I don't want people telling me what to do."
"I can't stand it when people yell at me."
"Basic training" i
"Boot Camp"
"I don't know—I just don't know anything about it"
"I don't know—I just never have considered it. (?) I've never really had any exposure to it."
"I don't really like the concept of war."
"Because I don't want to wake up a 5:30, run 5 miles—all before breakfast."
"I think some people are intimidated by it, by the actual fact of going to boot camp and the possibility of going to war and dying for a certain reason."
"It saps all individuality out of you while at the same time anybody who wanted to be a pacifist and not participate would be forced too."
"I don't have any interest in it at all—I have respect for anybody that can do it. I just couldn't do it. It is just too hard."
"The training you have to go through—I've heard horror stories [What Stories?] Boot Camp stories. I have a friend that has to get up early and run."
"I don't know, I just don't know anything about it."
"All the yelling"
"Bad haircuts"
"I have a friend who is going into the Marines and he doesn't know where he is going. A lot of it is being away from family. It is the unknown."
"You have to work too hard"
"There is always the possibility that a war could happen and you would have to go to the front. Your life would be on the line. You could die."
"Boot camp and all the running and physical stuff. I don't want to run ten miles."
"People in your face all the time."
"I don't like some grown guy yelling at me at 0500 in the morning."
"I don't want to be in war and have to point a gun at somebody and kill them just because my country says they are bad."
"To fight over land, money, or oil is ridiculous and that's what we fight over."

"I'm a huge wimp and it is too hard."

"You're giving your best years, the years when your twenty to the military and that is not something I want to do. Yea, your just serving your country, but your having something control your life, somebody has got complete and utter control over you."

"I wouldn't want to be away from my family that long."

"Why are we preparing for a war, there is no war."

"It is a waste of time, it doesn't match my goals. I wouldn't want to go in for six years and waste my time."

What makes the military an attractive career option?

"It is a tradition in my family."

"College Money"

"People look up to you, they respect you."

"Nothing"

"Medical benefits"

"Traveling"

"Life experiences"

"The honor involved, the pride you get from serving."

"You learn a lot about life."

"Lots and lots of men."

"You get to do cool stuff."

"They'll pay for your school"

"People respect you."

"You learn a lot"

"I'm thinking boot camp would be good for a bunch of us, not a bad thing. You know, it gets you fit and gets you started right."

"You learn respect for authority."

"You get in shape."

"The life experience, being able to travel."

"You learn a lot of respect about yourself and what you can do."

Where and how do you develop your perceptions about the military?

"Stereotypes, TV stories"

"ROTC program"

"From my cousin"

"Movies"

What would it take to recruit you?

"I want to be a veterinarian and there are not veterinarian programs—and there is boot camp."

"If they did away with boot camp, I might be interested in it."

"If after I got out they would pay for my college or I had a good job waiting."

"If they would pay for my college and boot camp was easier and shorter; and no one could scream at me."

"No boot camp" i

"If you didn't have to get up so early."
"More sleep and no Boot Camp."
"More information, it is hard to get information."
"Money for college and how to get it."
"If you could just serve on the weekend."

What are the forces that have shaped your generation?

"The ability or access to information"
"The media has influenced us a lot."
"Our parents—we are sheltered."
"The Internet" i
"Pressure from parents"
"Our peers. Everywhere we go peers surround us, we are not around adults. There is so much pressure today."
"The wealth of our country, the economy."
"More opportunities, more freedoms. People are growing up by themselves."
"People are more religious."
"Lack of exposure to adversities and hardships."
"Good times, the peace, and prosperity."
"Everything is available"
"We are kind of spoiled and lazy."
"Columbine school shooting"
"The respect and tightness of our families."
"We are more knowledgeable."
"We are so use to some of the things that go on in out society that we have become numb to things that should startle us: the violence in the media, gay relationships, school shootings. We don't think as deeply about these things as we should."
"Music"
"We're well to do and don't want to lose that wealth."
"We've been pounded about the importance of college since day one."
"Lack of positive role models. There is no one to look up too."
"The violence in video games has made us numb to the violence in the real world."
"We have, like, a world religion, I don't know."
"It seems like everything is accepted today, divorce, homosexuality—moral ambiguity."
"We are exposed to more ideas, through the Internet and TV."
"We are a very me generation, it is all about you; do what you want; what you feel like."

What are you generational values, attitudes, and beliefs?

"We are materialistic." i
"I think there is a lot of unpatriotic feelings—it seems people don't care."
"We are desensitized to so many things."
"Our parents are overprotective."

"We value individuality more."

"Racial issues don't really matter. Interracial relationships are no big deal. It still shocks our parents."

"Teacher—Kids don't value the relationship they have with their parents. The way they talk to their parents would not have been tolerated in my generation. I would have never said the things to my parents that kids say to their parents today. They seem to show such little courtesy and respect to teachers and parents. They (teens) seem to believe they have so many rights."

Notes:

All in 1st FG felt they are expected to go to college.

Does each one of the services do something different? Asked one teen.

Teacher claims "they are not a generation that is highly motivated."

80% of those that served in WWII died states one teen. 45%, 60% were also stated.

All believed it was above 30% in WWII.

13 out of 18 believe the media is more influential then a personal credible source.

Saving Pvt Ryan movie that best depicts military. Other moves mentioned GI Jane, Generals Daughter, and Courage Under Fire.

Grapevine High School Focus Groups

What about the military is an unattractive career option or I wouldn't join the military because of this?

"You could die."

"They have to put big bonuses and what not, too attract people because so many die"

"Its not just dying, the emotional and physical scars haunt you for life."

"When I get out of high school I'm gonna be in my prime until about 24 and like, there is no girls in the military."

"Its just not fun. I want to go to college, party, and stuff. [Why can't you do that in the military?] I don't know what the military is all about."

"They mislead you about college."

"It is too physical, I wouldn't want to do all that."

"They don't offer anything I'm looking at."

"You hear a lot about rape and sexual harassment. My parents wouldn't want me to join."

"I don't know what I want to do, but if I were to enlist and didn't like it, I'd have to stay in. Whereas college you can drop out of."

"Four years is too long of a commitment"

"When you join you are pressured to stay in for a life time."

"If you join the military and get out after four years, you have sort of wasted those four years if you don't stay in."

"I don't want to run around the jungle with someone shooting at me."

"Low pay."

"My family is really important and I wouldn't want to be away."
"Combat—dying"
"I've heard horror war stories from my parents, like, Vietnam and the draft."
"We had the Gulf War, but it wasn't really a war but defending economic issues."
"I don't like the physical work."
"I wouldn't want anybody in my face, like, all the time."

What is attractive about the military as a career option or I might be willing to join because of this?

"Life time benefits"
"Opportunities, people who can't go to college can do that."
"You get in good shape."
"Nothing!"
"It teaches you a lot of discipline."
"My brother was having a lot of problems and it helped him."
"You learn a lot of respect for other people—authority."
"You know exactly what you'll be doing for four years. Its no like you're going to be out of a job."
"It will finance all of your college."
"The discipline you learn and people respect you."
"You get to play with big machinery."
"It looks good, people respect you."
"Get your college paid for."
"Certain traits you learn, like, self-discipline."

Why are you going to college?

"Get a good job" i
"Make good money"
"Getting a little piece of paper that says you can make money."
"You would waste 13 years of your life??????????"
"To be on your own."
"Mom said I had to go."
"I heard college is the best time of your life."
"Time to decide what you want to do."

How do you differentiate between military and college as far as being away from home?

"A lot more order and restrictions in the military."

What would the service need to do to recruit you?

"I come from a single parent home. If they would, like, give money to your family if you die, I'd be more interested."
"More information"
"Shorter contracts—when people are stuck in something they don't like they probably won't do as well."

"People are worried about the safety aspect—nobody wants to get killed."

"More information on what it is all about."

"Have a trail period, like a week where you sign them up; take them out; teach them the basics; you put them through what it is going to be like and what it is going to take. At the end of that they can say "hey" I want to sign up."

What are the forces are that have shaped and molded you as a generation?

"Technology" i

"Our parents want a lot from us."

"End of the Cold War."

"Religion—more emphasis. There Seems to be more emphasis on morals." i

"The good economy" i

"Parents and history"

"The media more than anything else."

"We've had it pretty cooch growing up; parents looking out for us, no wars, good economy, no depression."

"Internet, we can get pretty much get anything we want by sitting behind a computer."

"It seems like we are a generation of instant gratification."

"Drive to make money"

"All the movies and events--the media."

"Family and religion."

"Medical cures available and diseases today."

"More emphasis on morality."

"Lots and lots of rules."

What are your generational attitudes, values, and beliefs?

"Grow up—be, like, a productive member of society. Don't be a bum."

"Pursuit of success"

"We all want to achieve something."

"We are codependent on the protected sheltered lifestyle."

"We've sort of been babied by our parents."

"My dad use to mow the lawn, clean the garage and ask for $2.00 to go to the movies. We ask our parents for movie money and we get $20.00 without doing anything."

"Pursuit of education and success"

"You have to have a college degree."

"More community interaction."

"More tolerant of racial and ethnic differences."

"Our parents have given us so much more than they ever had."

What characterizes your generation?

"We are optimistic about the future that things will keep getting better."

"The need to succeed."

"We are impatient, want everything now."

"Pressured, pressured, pressured."

Where and how do you get your perceptions?

"Movies—Saving Pvt Ryan"
"Commercials"
"Major Pain"
"Under Siege"
"Top Gun"
"Full Metal Jacket"
"Major Pain"
"My father was in Vietnam and any time he talks about it, it isn't good."

What movie best depicts the military?

"Full Metal Jacket or Saving Pvt Ryan—it shows you the reality of it."

What picture comes to mind when you think of an Airman?

"Top Gun and Tom Cruise" "Somebody really smart."

Sailor?
"Swabbing the deck and doing little dances," "Old dirty, sweaty, mold"

Solider?
"He has got a helmet on, he is camouflaged and running through the jungle." "Muddy and dirty"

Marine?
"The dude with the sword fighting the dragon."

How can the military recruit you?

"More money"
"Do away with the hard sell recruiters use, it makes them seem desperate."
"A test period before you sign up."
Notes:
** 2 out of first FG GHS did not feel they were expected or pressured to go to college.

<u>Cedar Falls High School</u>

What are the forces are that have shaped and molded you as a generation?

"Technology"
"A lot more education."
"The Internet"
"Advances in health care."
"Politics and the government have become a lot less cut and dry, and it seems it is much more complicated today."

"The Media shapes too much of what we learn."
"Religion"
"Rising expectations"

Why are you going to college?

"Higher paying job"
"A lot more jobs require a higher education."
"So I don't have to work at McDonalds."
"You can't make it without a college degree."
"It is the next step, the default decision."
"It seems like fun and everybody is going."
"I want a higher level of understanding."

What about the military is an unattractive career option or how do you answer the question I wouldn't join the military because of this?

"The commitment is too long. It's a lot of work. [Well, isn't college?] Yea, but then you have immediate gratification. There is a payoff with college. There doesn't seem to be a payoff with the military."

"Fighting a war and dying." i

"In the past we have had wars to defend our rights and it was patriotic. Now, we know the army [military] needs people; but what for? There is no war. There is not a big prevailing cause. Basically, it is the pay and benefits."

"They are way mean to people and they break your spirit."

"They are always up early, work hard, and they don't go to bed until late. It is just too hard."

"It is too strict."

"It is unpredictable."

"The government takes most of your money any way. Yea, they might offer you a signing bonus, but they will still not give you everything they say. It happened to my brother that way."

"People go broke in the military—they don't pay them enough."

"Your made to respect people you may not want to."

"If you have plans for college, you get side tracked for 2-3 years. It puts you behind everybody else."

"Its not only death, but the emotional causalities and the loss of limbs, blinding."

"They're always yelling at you and they are mean."

"The whole thing about leaving and losing time."

"Death comes to mind."

"I couldn't kill somebody—war doesn't solve anything." i

"People that have been in it before tell about, and it is way different than they show."

"Death and killing others."

"You hear stories about how drill sergeants get right up in your face and yell at you."

"Lack of motivation for fighting for your country."

"It just doesn't seem very fun. [What do you think makes it not fun?] I don't know, people yell at you and are mean to you."

"Having to do things I don't always agree with."

"I don't have any opinion."

"I don't want to do it, let someone else do it."

"Too much discipline and control."

"I might get sent to a war that I didn't feel was worth fighting for, I wouldn't be very appreciative of that and I couldn't back out—especially risking my life for something I didn't believe in."

"I'm too lazy."

"Three or four years of being told what to do is not appealing."

"I don't know, I've always heard bad stuff."

"The thought of going to war and being hurt or killed."

"Separation from your family."

"The military is more strict. It's not like you go to work come home, lay around and watch TV, or whatever. It seems like you are at work more often."

"I've heard you have to get up so early—I don't really want to do that."

"Hard work."

"I heard when you get a rank or something they poke the pins in you."

"It is real strict and demanding, seems hard, and you have someone yelling at you. I don't know if I could handle the pressure of it."

"It seems very difficult. I don't know if I could do it."

What is attractive about the military as a career option or I might be willing to join because of this?

"You go around and get to see the world."

"There are a lot of good financial benefits and programs."

"The discipline and self-improvement."

"It would take a lot of hard work and I would have to be fit in order to do it. So I guess, like, you get really fit."

"Pride of belonging"

"All my friends that have served have grown up a lot. It forced them to mature a lot quicker. They all are better off for it."

"More job opportunities. You might be more marketable when you get out."

"It is a good wake up call."

"You stay fit."

"It makes you a non-slacker."

"You get to play with cool gadgets."

"The honor you get" i

"You get to travel and money for college."

"The adrenaline rush of combat."

"Getting away from home."

"Travel"

"Pays for most of your college." i

"Cool technology"

"Good benefits." i
"You're getting paid to learn a lot of different things."
"Your helping people"
"The life experiences you gain."
"Pride and respect you have."
"I hear it really helps you get a good job when you get out."
"You get to explore and see the world."
"I heard you get good benefits, like, you can fly free or something."
"You get to retire when you're thirty or something."
"You get to experience a lot of different things most people normally don't."

What are your generational attitudes, values, and beliefs?

"If you don't grow with the technology, you aren't really going to make it."
"We are searching for meaning."
"We are more tolerant toward differences."
"Everyone kind of comes together better. We value teamwork more."
"Race and ethnicity don't matter as much anymore."
"We are independent."
"We are healthier"
"We can find things out easier, more knowledgeable."
"Misunderstood, people think we are all bad commit all kinds of awful crimes."
"We're under more pressure, a lot more rules."

How can the military recruit you?

"Make it seem a better thing to do or more important (relevant). Make it seem like a good place, not just for wars and paying for college. You want to go there because you want to go there, not just for college."

"We need a worthwhile cause. Right now nobody wants to go to fight in a foreign country that doesn't threaten us—like Kosovo."

"Dramatic increase in pay. It is so demanding, it should pay more."

"A lot of people just don't know anything about it."

"Let you pick your duty station."

"I think in general all the military should work on like women and sexual harassment."

"There is really no reason to join, show us a reason, give us a reason of why we should join."

"More pay"

"Our generation is more aware of the crap that goes along with politics and the exploitation we do to other countries. Our generation does not want to be part of that."

"Make it look like its fun, it looks like it is work, work, work, work."

"Show them off having fun, being normal."

"Promote the humanitarian missions the military does, not just war."

"Emphasis the military helping other people, that would appeal to me."

Where do you get your perceptions?

"Family members"
"Documentaries on TV"
"RAMBO, First Blood"

Notes:

Of those that wore a uniform during the Vietnam War, how many were killed in combat?

"20%, 30% 13 thought 20% or higher. Almost all felt it was higher than 20%.

12 from media, 6 from family friends

Tripoli High School Focus Groups

How can the military we recruit you?

"Reinforce the fact that the military will pay for college—most teens still don't know."

"Get rid of the hard sell."

"They need to explain better what you're actually getting into. Whereas college, you know exactly what your doing."

"Inform you more about what you do when you are in it, not just the benefits. It is just known that the Marines are hard core, but no one knows what they really do."

"Military come off as overbearing. When I think of the military, I always think of fighting a war. Try to show those other things they do besides just wars."

What about the military is an unattractive career option or how do you answer the question I wouldn't join the military because of this?

"It is so hard. [What is hard?] All the work, you can't live a normal life. You're restricted."

"The obligation is too long."

"All I ever see is hard work and waking up early."

"It is too hard and I'm not that good."

"There is to many guys, I'd feel overwhelmed."

"You have to be so strong, all those exercises. I just couldn't do it."

"You might have to fight and die."

"Contractual obligation is too long."

"The pull-ups, it is too physical."

"The conformity. [What do you mean?] Well, yall look the same, talk the same, dress the same, do the same things. It's a loss of identity."

"The physical things you have to do."

"If you join you have to stay in for a life time right? What do you mean? How long do you have to stay in if you join? Twenty years."

"It is to much in your face approach to recruiting."

"In the military you can't express your opinion. You have to do what your told."

"You don't have enough freedom."

"You lose your power to make decisions for yourself."

"A war could spring up and I'd have to put my life on the line."

"The intensity of the training."

"I wouldn't join the military because you give them to much control, and too much say over what I do."

"Being shipped away from family."

"Once you're in it your in it for life? Right? I wouldn't want to be in it for such a long period of time."

"I wouldn't want to get that dirty."

"I don't like guns."

"It is too hard, too much work."

What is attractive about the military as a career option or I might be willing to join because of this?

"Money"

"A lot of benefits."

"Traveling" i

"The respect you get. When you walked in everybody noticed you."

"Paying for college"

"They provide everything for you."

"Self-improvement."

"Its got great benefits and you learn a lot about life."

"Double pension."

"Money for college"

"Travel, you get to see places you have never been before."

"You learn a lot of discipline. If you don't know what you want to do you could go in (military) and you'd come out with a lot of discipline and focus."

"They offer a lot of assistance"

"I think a lot of people in the military are looked upon with honor. It takes a lot of guts to go and fight for the country."

"You get really buffed."

"You pretty much know you'll always have a job"

"I hear they have great benefits."

What are the forces are that have shaped and molded you?

"Parents and the way they want us to be." i

"Technology"

"Bill Clinton and everything he has gotten away with."

"The peace and prosperity we have had."

"Social safety net available from the government."

"Technology, the Internet." i

"Increased standards, we don't try to slack off so much. You have to always be your best."

"We have more opportunities; easier to go to college; participate in sports, parents give you more."

"We have learned to resolve problems differently because of education."

"The good economy."

Where do you get your perceptions?

"TV"
"Saving Pvt Ryan"
"Movies"
"Discovery channel."

Movie that best depict the military.

"Full Metal Jacket"
"Hamburger Hill"
"Under Siege"

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APPENDIX E. DEFINITION OF REASONS FOR SELECTING A SERVICE, UNIVERSAL CONSCRIPTION EXERCISE

Personal Credible Source

Defined as a family member, friend or relative. Normally a teen would respond, "I'd join the Army because my uncle severed in the Army."

Advertising

Attributed when a student said, "I'd join the Marine Corps because of their commercials."

Self Improvement

Attributed when a student said something similar to, "I'd join the Marine Corps to learn self-discipline or to get fit."

Fly

Only credited when a teen actually used the term to fly.

Mission/Environment of Service

Defined as those aspects that make a particular service unique. For instance, many teens stated, "I'd select the Navy to be around the ocean." Or, "I'd select the Air Force because I'm interested in aviation." Or, "I'd join the Army to drive a tank." Or, "I'd join the Marines to be a part of ANGLIO."

Treat people

Attributed to that particular service when a student stated something similar to "I'd join the Air Force because they treat their people better."

Challenge/Best

Credited when a teen stated something similar to "I'd join the Marines because they're the best" or, "I'd join the Marines because they are the toughest."

Easier

Attributed to this category when a student indicated they would join that service because they felt it was easier than the other services.

Travel

Credited when a student said something such as, "I'd join the Navy to see the world."

Opportunity for action

Specifically counted in this category when teens said something similar to, "I'd join the Marines because they get more opportunity to see action."

Unknown

Marked in the "unknown" category when a student could not, or would not, indicate why he or she would select a particular service. Additionally, much of this category is attributed to responses that were not audible while reviewing focus group tapes.

Medical Service Corps

Credited when a teen specifically indicated some aspect "medical service".

Training/Technology

Attributed when a teen that stated something similar to, "I'd join the Air Force because the high tech jobs they have" or, "I'd join the Navy because of the tech training available."

Navy Seals/SOF

Only credited when a student specifically said they would join the Navy to be a SEAL or the Army to be in Special Operations or, words to that effect.

Job Opportunities/College

Attributed to any student who indicated he or she would join that particular service because of the "job opportunities or money for college."

Uniform

Only counted when a student specifically stated, "I'd join the Marines because of their uniforms."

Safest place

Comments were credited to this category when a teen stated, "I'd join the Air Force because it is a lot safer than the other services."

Intellectual Challenge

Only counted when a teen stated, "I'd join the Air Force because of the intellectual challenge" or words to this effect.

Movies

Only counted when a teen indicated they would join a particular branch because of a movie they had seen.

Band

Counted when a teen specifically mentioned they would join that particular branch because of its band.

Bonus

Only counted when a teen mentioned a bonus as a reason to select a particular service.

Team

Counted when a teen responded he or she would select that particular branch because of teamwork.

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